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“Race, Recreation and the American South: Georgia’s Black State Fair 1906-1930”

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For my Mother and Father

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## Summary

### **Race, Recreation and the American South: Georgia's Black State Fair, 1906-1930**

This thesis provides a specific insight into the previously unexplored subject of the black fair in Macon, Georgia from 1906 to 1930. It draws on archives, government papers, newspaper reports, and the correspondence of black leaders in order to create a localised study documenting the attempts of Georgia's African Americans to further themselves and to improve race relations within their community. Subsequently, the fair creates a microcosm of wider efforts of black uplift and racial politics in the South during this period. The fair reveals the work of Richard Wright, a figure who demonstrated how local African American leaders often straddled the doctrines of W. E. B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington, and adapted their philosophies within everyday life. The fair is also illustrative of how leaders such as Washington also cultivated relationships with black community leaders and fellow educators, while also connecting to the black masses. Similarly the celebration and appearance of national black political figures, such as James Napier, encouraged black pride and determination. Furthermore, such exhibits created powerful symbols which connected black political success with economic wealth.

The thesis thereby situates the black fair and its organisers within a significant period of black political development, one which contributed to the later Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Institutions such as the African American fair were vital spaces which fostered a sense of black community, economics and autonomy. This thesis helps draw attention to the importance of such recreational spaces, repositioning them within the political and social studies of black southerners during the early twentieth century.



## Introduction

“Tell them we are rising,” said Richard Robert Wright to General Oliver Otis Howard. It was 1865 when the white, northern, Civil-War veteran asked black schoolchildren what message he should take back to the people in the North.<sup>1</sup> Wright’s words became a rallying cry of aspiration for the black community and a declaration of intent aimed at the white community. Thirty-five years later, in an address given at the Waldorf Astoria in New York, Booker T. Washington recounted the same story, telling his white audience that the youngster was “a type of the race” that had been “rising ever since”. Indeed, he had grown up to become president of one of the most prestigious black colleges in the South.<sup>2</sup> In 1906, he organised the first African American run state fair in Georgia and his childhood response to Howard was adopted as its motto.<sup>3</sup> Above Wright’s words, on postcards advertising the fair, was a picture of a small black boy holding an American flag, connecting the fair to the most intimate hopes for the African American community: racial uplift and American citizenship.

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<sup>1</sup> Harriet Wright Lemon, “Brief Biographical Sketch of Major R. R. Wright, Sr.,” in *Radio Speeches of Major R. R. Wright Sr.* (Philadelphia: The Farmer Press, 1949), xi; John Greenleaf Whittier, “Howard at Atlanta” [1869] in *The Complete Poetical Works of John Greenleaf Whittier* (Charleston, South Carolina: The Forgotten Book Company, 1924), 353; Elizabeth Ross Hayes, *Black Boy of Atlanta* (New York: G. K. Hall, 1997); Ruth Wright Hayre and Alexis Moore, *Tell Them We are Rising: A Memoir of Faith in Education* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> “Extracts from an address given at a dinner for Oliver Otis Howard”, November 8<sup>th</sup> 1900, in Louis R. Harlan and Raymond W. Smock (eds.), *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, Vol. 5 (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 670.

<sup>3</sup> June O. Patton, “Major Richard Robert Wright, Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia, 1880-1920” (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1980), 510.

State fairs are still an iconic part of American recreation. In 2010 the State Fair of Texas was ranked as the most popular fair with approximately 2,618,500 people attending the event.<sup>4</sup> While there have been studies of white state fairs, their black counterparts have largely escaped from the historic gaze. This thesis repositions the importance of black fairs within our historical imagination and consciousness. This study is the first of thesis length to focus exclusively on the black state fair in the South in the early twentieth century. It directs attention towards southern black recreational spaces, which have attracted less scholarly attention than those in the North, and has broader implications for our understanding of race relations in the South.<sup>5</sup> Scholars note that at black state fairs, African American colleges, business

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<sup>4</sup> The Georgia state fair in Macon is not included in the list of the top 50 fairs in 2010. The competing “National” fair in Perry, Georgia was ranked number 43. During the fair a total of 465,053 people attended. Carnival Warehouse, “2010 Top 50 fairs”, <http://www.carnivalwarehouse.com/lists/2010list.pdf> (accessed 21.08.11).

<sup>5</sup> Scholars have often focused on northern urban centres such as Chicago and New York in their exploration of black recreation and political activism, in particular the New Negro Movement or the Harlem Renaissance. See, for example, Harold Bloom (ed.), *The Harlem Renaissance* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004); David Krasner, *A Beautiful Pageant: African American Theatre, Drama, and Performance in the Harlem Renaissance, 1910-1927* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Anne Elizabeth Carroll, *Word, Image, and the New Negro: Representation and Identity in the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005). Notable scholars have similarly examined black recreation during this period within the context of wider studies of the South such as John Dittmer, *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era 1900-1920* (Champaign: University of Illinois, 1977); Ted Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Steve Goodson, *Highbrows, Hillbillies and Hellfire: Public Entertainment in Atlanta 1800-1930* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002); Gavin Jones Campbell, *Music and the Making of the New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press,

owners, and agricultural producers all exhibited in a manner comparable to their white counterparts. They have also acknowledged that black fairs included a strong undercurrent that emphasised racial uplift. However, my study extends our most basic knowledge and understanding of the black fair, and presents the fair as a rich and compelling subject, one which has exciting new implications for the field of American studies.

In focusing on the phenomenon of racial uplift, the thesis provides extensive details of how southern African Americans created a renewed and revised self-image through the state fair. Between 1906 and 1919, black communities in the South attempted to combat and refute racist and stereotypical representations circulating in American culture by offering alternative images that affirmed African American existence and experience. The fair became a black-led communal project through which African Americans sought to shape and control their social and political identities. This thesis argues that recreational spaces were significant, not only as a black alternative to white dominated events, but also as a place in which negotiation took place between the black and white communities. In achieving such things I argue that the black fair moved beyond being a purely recreational event and became a critical space for political activity that should be reconsidered as a strategy of resistance, one which was a precursor of the civil rights movement of the 1950s.

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2004); Pete Daniel, *Standing at the Crossroads: Southern Life Since 1900* (New York: Hill/Wang, 1986); Mark Schultz, *The Rural Face of White Supremacy: Beyond Jim Crow* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2005).

This thesis provides a linear history of the black fair in Macon, Georgia from its origins in 1906. Chapter One establishes the importance of Booker T. Washington's theory of accommodationism within the fair, following the devastating effect of Atlanta's 1906 riot and how, on a larger scale, it was an effective means of promoting black rights. Chapter Two examines evolving black and white relations within the context of the fair, as they related to notions of middle-class racial uplift. It stresses how the bi-racial relationship within the fair helped further black needs, whilst conversely shaping them through the lens of white nostalgia for slavery. Chapter Three highlights the social, economic and psychological benefits of the black fair for African Americans, while also revealing the community and business networks that existed between black communities in various counties throughout Georgia, ranging from Augusta to Savannah and Macon. Chapter Four continues this argument by stressing how such affirmative displays formed the founding tenets of black political ideologies such as Garveyism and organisations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The blending of recreation with an undercurrent of activism at the fair was a vital political method in a society in which overt displays of black expression were severely and violently repressed. The concluding chapter examines the end of the black fair and the rise of political activism within Macon's black community from 1919 to 1930.

The thesis focuses on the black state fair in Georgia as a case study for several reasons. Georgia was emblematic of southern race relations during this era, creating a violent and volatile backdrop to the fair. Georgia's history of racial conflict creates a compelling context for the venture of the fair, imbuing this public space inhabited by African Americans with added significance. Georgia drew together many key

developments and conflicts which defined the Jim Crow era. The state had various race riots, including one of the worst and most highly publicised in Atlanta during 1906, and the region similarly had a high lynching rate. The city of Macon meanwhile provides a microcosm of wider industrial developments which occurred during this period and illustrates how such urbanisation resulted in economic and social dislocation among its citizens. In contrast to this, Georgia also saw the rise of the black middle class. The choice of Georgia for this study is also determined by the availability of archival sources. As discussed later, primary source evidence concerning black fairs is often difficult to locate but Georgia's event is relatively well documented. In addition to this, the state's black fairs were historically significant in terms of the people who appeared at them. Many prominent black figures associated with accommodationism, most notably Booker T. Washington along with his key advisors, attended the event. It demonstrated the hands-on approach of black politicians with the black masses and how the fair created a space that allowed this contact. Booker T. Washington's appearance at the inaugural fair, in particular, connected the event to prominent political figures and debates over race during the early twentieth century.

Fairs are a common cultural practice in the United States and have a long and varied history. In the early 1800s, they were largely organised by agricultural societies whose concerns centred on crops, livestock, and the rights and function of land. Such fairs were annual events, primarily used to educate farmers through discussions and competitions that awarded prizes for crops and animals of the highest quality. These fairs proved popular in agricultural states, usually being held at the beginning of

autumn, after the crops had been gathered.<sup>6</sup> During the mid-1800s, fairs were seen by rural and small-town folk as an important annual social ritual that drew isolated farm families to county and state capitals in order to socialise with friends. Additionally, they provided an opportunity to find out about improved seed varieties, livestock breeds, and the latest technological developments in agriculture.<sup>7</sup>

So-called state fairs emerged in the 1840s as regional authorities “became larger and more prosperous, [and] began to take an interest in agricultural matters on a state-wide basis”.<sup>8</sup> The first was held in New York in 1841 and Georgia followed suit five years later.<sup>9</sup> State fairs offered the opportunity to promote the region, in effect performing a booster function by positively advertising the state’s agricultural produce and the industriousness of its citizens. State fairs were usually organised by agricultural clubs which raised money for prizes, as well as making arrangements to purchase or lease the land for these events. The fairs received no money from the state and organisers sought to recover, and even profit from, their investment by imposing entry fees on competitors and by also charging fairgoers admission to the grounds. At the turn of

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<sup>6</sup> Donald B. Marti, *Historical Directory of American Agricultural Fairs* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1986); Derek Nelson, *The American State Fair* (Norwalk, Connecticut: MBI Publishing, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> “Fairs”, Oklahoma Historical Society, Encyclopedia of Oklahoma <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/S/ST021.html>; Chris Rasmussen, “Fairs Here Have Become a Sort of Holiday: Agriculture and Amusement at Iowa’s County Fairs, 1838-1925”, *Annals of Iowa*, 1999, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Lila Perl, *America Goes to the Fair - All About State and County Fairs in the USA* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1974), 43.

<sup>9</sup> “Fairs”, Oklahoma Historical Society, Encyclopaedia of Oklahoma.

twentieth century the fee was approximately twenty-five cents which meant that many poor farm families, particularly from small rural communities, were often under-represented in state fairs.<sup>10</sup>

While state fairs did continue to be a source of education for farmers at the turn of the twentieth century, they gradually shifted their focus towards entertainment. By the late 1800s, commercial associations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, were the primary organisers of state fairs, which had the effect of transforming such events into little more than trade shows that brought customers to town.<sup>11</sup> As a result, fairs typically began to feature midways which housed thrill rides, food booths and tent sideshows. In addition there were special events, such as horse racing and parades.<sup>12</sup> During this period state fairs no doubt drew inspiration from the larger, flamboyant displays of world's fairs, which began in 1851 with the Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace. The world's fairs were ostentatious spectacles of industry, art, entertainment and showmanship which conveyed the progress and achievements of the modern era, a format which was mimicked, in part, by smaller state fairs.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "Fairs", Oklahoma Historical Society, *Encyclopaedia of Oklahoma*,

<http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/F/FA025.html> (accessed 12.06.11).

<sup>11</sup> Ownby, *Subduing Satan*, 182; Jim L. Sumner, "Let Us Have a Big Fair: The North Carolina Exposition of 1884", *North Carolina Historical Review* 69 (January 1992), 57-81.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid; Rodger Lyle Brown, *Ghost Dancing on the Cracker Circuit: The Culture of Festivals in the American South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> Louise Purbrick, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: New Interdisciplinary Essays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

Despite the fact that state fairs often had a midway, sources show that they were intended to be a more moral, family-orientated form of recreation.<sup>14</sup> During the nineteenth and twentieth century, carnival midways frequently came under attack from churches and newspapers, which condemned them as “decadent dens of moral corruption”.<sup>15</sup> State fairs therefore provided a more virtuous form of recreation for local communities. In 1912, John Hamilton, a *Farmers’ Institute* specialist for the United States Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C., stressed that “entertainments are all unobjectionable when properly controlled, and provide entertainment to those who come to spend an idle hour. They should, however, not be permitted to interfere with the main exhibitions and the more serious purposes of the fair.”<sup>16</sup> These more formal features were orientated around exhibits from schools alongside the domestic displays of local women, such as prize-winning foodstuffs and needlework, and the produce of regional agriculturalists. Similarly, state fairs were based around—and organised by—the local community, contrasting with transient events such as circuses, freak shows, medicine shows and other types of travelling entertainment, which were essentially run by showmen, who were often considered to be “footloose outsiders with no home and questionable morals”.<sup>17</sup>

Turn-of-the-century fairs were also shaped by the emergence of Jim Crow laws that enforced racial segregation in the South. Fairs and carnivals in the region were often

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<sup>14</sup> John Hamilton, “Influences Exerted by Agricultural Fairs”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 40 (March 1912), 206.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 77.

<sup>16</sup> Hamilton, “Influences Exerted by Agricultural Fairs”, 206.

<sup>17</sup> Bogdan, *Freak Shows*, 79.



segregated prior to, and during, Reconstruction.<sup>18</sup> Historian Howard Rabinowitz briefly examined state fairs within the context of segregation in the South, stating that a “special gate was provided for blacks in the exposition building at a Nashville fair in 1875; there was a ‘colored people’s saloon’ in addition to the main grandstand saloon at the 1871 Georgia State Fair in Macon; and, at the Southern Exposition held in Montgomery in 1890, the two races ate in separate restaurants.”<sup>19</sup> Consequently, African Americans were compelled to fund and organise separate all-black fairs and this remained the case until the civil rights movement challenged Jim Crow laws in the 1950s and 1960s.

This thesis is informed by and contributes to existing literature on fairs, black recreation and African American grassroots politics. Critical existing texts include Robert Rydell’s analysis of world fairs as a space in which imperialistic discourses of race and politics operated.<sup>20</sup> Similarly significant is Kathleen Clark’s examination of

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<sup>18</sup> Donald L. Grant, *The Way It Was in the South: The Black Experience in Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 219.

<sup>19</sup> Howard N. Rabinowitz, “From Exclusion to Segregation: Southern Race Relations, 1865-1890” in Rabinowitz, *Race, Ethnicity, and Urbanization Selected Essays* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994), 152.

<sup>20</sup> Robert W. Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); and, *World of Fairs: The Century of Progress Exhibitions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Burton Benedict, *The Anthropology of the World’s Fairs: San Francisco’s Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915* (Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1983); John Dury, “Visitors to Fair Praise Chicago Streets—and People”, *Chicago Daily News*, June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1933; Robert Haddow, *Pavilions of Plenty: Exhibiting American Culture Abroad in the 1950s* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute, 1997); Trent Watts, “Mississippi’s Giant House Party: Being White At Neshoba County Fair”, *Southern Cultures* 8 (Summer, 2002), 38-55.

black celebrations of Emancipation, which argues that these days provided a vital source of black history and progress which helped to legitimise African American claims to citizenship. Likewise, Mitch Kachun's study of festivals which celebrated black freedom, from 1808 to 1915, provides an illuminating look at such celebrations as places which helped foster a sense of African American authored memory and activism.<sup>21</sup>

The black fair stands as a unique event which defies definition within the parameters of existing studies; rather, it blended aspects of the World Fair and Emancipation Day. Unlike Emancipation Day, however, the fair was not celebrating a national black political and cultural event, but, similar to the World Fair, it did have a marked recreational and educational purpose. Black fairs similarly had a commercial purpose as they helped market African American goods and produce, and they were essentially black-authored events designed to demonstrate black concerns. The fair created an apolitical facade, as it adopted the cultural forms and industrial concerns of white business progressives. Due to this frontage the fair was able to extend its boundaries beyond those of a recreational event and promote a political and social consciousness and sense of collective identity among its black visitors. In that respect, this study allies itself to the work of Steven Hahn who points to the rise of grassroots institutions as arenas in which blacks were able to pursue a political and social agenda.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Kathleen Clark, *Defining Moments: African American Commemoration and Political Culture in the South, 1863-1913* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Mitch Alan Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom: Memory and Meaning in African American Emancipation Celebrations, 1808-1915* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003).

<sup>22</sup> Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003), 462.

Some academic texts have made occasional or peripheral references to black fairs. Archivist Jim Sumners has written an article about the North Carolina Black State fair in the 1800s; however, as Sumner's article is predominantly descriptive it does not tackle the intricacies of the fair, particularly regarding race relations.<sup>23</sup> My analysis of the Georgia black fair instead demonstrates that African Americans used segregated recreational spaces to advance themselves, and in turn, such recreational spaces became highly politicised. My thesis thus reveals areas in which Sumner's evidence, regarding North Carolina's African American state fair, could be analytically enriched.

One of the most in-depth works is Michele Mitchell's exploration of "better baby shows" at black fairs, events which encouraged women to learn about "hygiene, diet and infant care," messages which, Mitchell argues, related to social issues of black fertility, fecundity and race betterment.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, scholars such as Leon Litwack have discussed Ex-Slave Days at state fairs, during which slaves were reunited with their former masters. Litwack and Mitchell have focused on very specific aspects of the fair, using them as evidence of how they contributed to other subjects in American history. My main focus is on the cultural phenomenon of the African American fair and I therefore focus solely on the event over a lengthy period of time. The thesis fills a clear gap as it provides a sustained and comprehensive examination of the black state fair, from which emerge broader themes of race, class and politics.

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<sup>23</sup> Jim Sumner, "The African American State Fair", *Tar Heel Junior Historian* 42:1 (Fall, 2002), 26-27.

<sup>24</sup> Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 96.

Georgia's fair was shaped by its historical conditions and political context. Black institutions helped to provide vital outlets for individual and community expression within the white-dominated cultural terrain of the South. Separate black and white institutions, however, developed largely out of necessity, as a result of the Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (1896), which upheld the constitutionality of segregation through the infamous doctrine of "separate but equal". In particular, Jim Crow regulations entailed the segregation or exclusion of African Americans from various entertainment venues including theatres and dance halls. Historian Clifford Kuhn states in his oral history of Atlanta that "the rules and customs of a segregated society meant that many public spots were off limits for black citizens".<sup>25</sup> Georgia had passed its first segregated park law in 1905 and, by 1911, its capital, Atlanta, had no black parks.<sup>26</sup>

As a result of the restrictive conditions placed on the African American community, black schools, social clubs and fraternities grew up independently of the white mainstream. Such institutions provided a physical refuge from the humiliating deference of the Jim Crow regime along with a place in which black conversations, actions and sense of self were protected from watchful white eyes. Since black public institutions, such as Atlanta's first black night club, were only established in 1938, Kuhn notes that in Atlanta, recreation was often centred around the homestead.<sup>27</sup> Historian John Dittmer has similarly stated that forms of black recreation were still very much in evidence despite restrictions and that "just as lynchings, whitecappings

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<sup>25</sup> Clifford M. Kuhn, E. Bernard West, and Harlon E. Joye, *Living Atlanta 1914-1948: An Oral History of the City* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 260.

<sup>26</sup> Grant, *The Way It Was in the South*, 218.

<sup>27</sup> Kuhn, et al. *Living Atlanta*, 260.

and race riots were facts of life in black Georgia, so were church picnics, baseball games, and Saturday night frolics.”<sup>28</sup> Despite evidence that certain public spaces were subject to Jim Crow restrictions from 1915, blacks were not completely excluded and gained access to Macon’s parks on a segregated basis.<sup>29</sup> For instance, on May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1919, the “Colored Sunday School Teachers Union” applied for use of Central City Park.<sup>30</sup>

In contrast to the prevailing spirit of repression, black state fairs created a large-scale, public, celebration of black life. One of the oldest black fair organizations had been initiated in Lexington, Kentucky in 1869 and was still going strong when it celebrated its 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1913.<sup>31</sup> In 1879, a second black fair was established in Raleigh, North Carolina and it was intended “to improve and educate North Carolina’s African Americans and to demonstrate what newly freed people could accomplish.” Its goals and purpose set a blueprint for the ethos of Georgia’s black fair in later years and the North Carolina’s organisers similarly appealed to “our farmers, mechanics, arti[s]ans, and educators, to come forward and place on exhibition their best productions.”<sup>32</sup> The North Carolina fair, likewise, contained industrial and

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<sup>28</sup> Dittmer, *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era*, 50.

<sup>29</sup> In a telling part of Macon’s history regarding segregated public spaces, the bust of Senator A. O. Bacon, who in 1915 willed 55 acres of Baconsfield Park for the use of whites only, was not taken down until 1986; Grant, *The Way It Was in the South*, 218.

<sup>30</sup> Macon City Council Minutes, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1919, Washington Memorial Library, Macon, Georgia.

<sup>31</sup> *The American Missionary*, Volume 54, No. 1, January 1900, [www.gutenberg.org/files/27714/27714-h/27714-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/27714/27714-h/27714-h.htm) (accessed 12.06.11); Monroe N. Work (ed.), *Negro Year Book, 1914* (Tuskegee Institute, Alabama; Negro Year Book Publishing, 1914), 9.

<sup>32</sup> Sumner, “The African American State Fair”, 58-67.

agricultural exhibits, along with artistic and domestic displays. Many leading black politicians and members of the press also contributed to, and reported on, the fair. The North Carolina fair lasted for a decade but the reasons as to why it was discontinued are unclear. At the start of the twentieth century, other black state fairs were also established within various states: Mississippi (1906),<sup>33</sup> Alabama (1908)<sup>34</sup> and Texas (1912).<sup>35</sup> By 1914 there were also black fairs in Tennessee and South Carolina.<sup>36</sup> There was also a National Negro Fair Association established in Michigan in 1908, which represented southern, as well as other states.<sup>37</sup>

As with many black state fairs, Georgia's was based on the model of its white counterpart which had originally been established as a show by the Southern Central Agricultural Society. Both the white and black fairs took place in Macon's Central City Park. It is important to point out that while the African American fair was either referred to as the "Negro" or "colored" fair by both black and white citizens in various

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<sup>33</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, October 5<sup>th</sup> 1906; "The Great Negro Fair. Bulletin No. 2. Raleigh, North Carolina, October, 1904", Documenting the American South, North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/fair/fair.html> (accessed 28.03.2009). There is also evidence that there was an earlier attempt at a "Colored State Fair" in Jackson, Mississippi. See *New York Times*, October 27<sup>th</sup>; October 30<sup>th</sup>; November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1885.

<sup>34</sup> *Mobile Register*, November 24<sup>th</sup> 1908; *Alexander's Magazine*, Volumes 6-7, (New York: Negro University Press, 1908).

<sup>35</sup> Thad Sitton and James H. Conrad, *Freedom Colonies: Independent Black Texans in the Time of Jim Crow* (Austin: University Press of Texas, 2005), 119.

<sup>36</sup> Work (ed.), *Negro Year Book, 1914*, 9.

<sup>37</sup> "Circular No. 29: African Americans, Government Records", Archives of Michigan, Lansing, [www.michigan.gov/archivesofmi](http://www.michigan.gov/archivesofmi) (accessed 02.05.11).

newspapers, the main state fair is designated as “white” in this thesis in order to distinguish clearly between the two fairs. The “Negro state fair” took place in Macon following the ten-day event of the white dominated state fair and lasted for a similar duration.<sup>38</sup> The black fair superficially provided a counterpart to the white state fair and, in 1906, Macon was likewise chosen to host the black event. According to a 1913 survey exploring “The Negro Population in the United States” conducted by Thomas Jesse Jones, a specialist at Washington’s Bureau of Education, Macon’s black population rose from 11,550 in 1900 to 18,150 in 1910. This showed that African Americans in Macon accounted for 44.6 per cent of the city’s total population.<sup>39</sup> A substantial black population, along with the town’s central position, therefore explained why Macon was chosen to host the black fair.

Georgia’s white and black fairs shared features which were characteristic of county and state fairs throughout the South. Crowds milled through the entrance gates and, upon entering Macon’s Central City Park, were confronted with a barrage of noises and smells. A sense of excitement and exhilaration accompanied the horse and automobile races.<sup>40</sup> Tents, stalls and animals were dotted about the park and even elephants were kept in the round house building on the fair’s midway. Exotic beasts were often a main attraction and, in 1907, George Rollinson’s “Wild Animal

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<sup>38</sup> For example, the *Macon Telegraph* noted that, during 1909, the white state fair was held from 27<sup>th</sup> October to 6<sup>th</sup> November and the “Negro” fair was held from 7<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> November. *Macon Telegraph*, October 27<sup>th</sup>; November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1909.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Jesse Jones, “Negro Population in the United States”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 49 (September 1913), 9.

<sup>40</sup> *Macon News*, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1909; November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1913.

Aggregation” appeared at both the white and black fairs.<sup>41</sup> The midway was often teeming with sideshows which contained freakish oddities such as the “clairvoyant twins”.<sup>42</sup> In 1909, four couples were married in a lions’ den.<sup>43</sup> In addition, there was a Spanish Vaudeville Show, Trick Horse Show, midgets, an Alligator Girl, Trained Mules and buffaloes.<sup>44</sup> These outlandish displays were often accompanied by rides and games such as shooting galleries, rollercoasters, Ferris wheels, ball games and roulette wheels.<sup>45</sup> In 1914, the black fair featured a “Negro high diver” who dived “100 feet from the top of a small ladder into a small pool of water about three or four times the size of an ordinary bath tub!”<sup>46</sup> In addition to these entertainment features, the fairs promoted agricultural and industrial exhibits which were produced from around the state and included farm produce, arts, food stuff and livestock. Exhibits from schools, colleges and universities also represented more localised, community-based concerns within the event. There was a main stage erected in the park and prominent politicians and orators from across the state came to address the crowds. Temporary buildings, entitled the “Women’s Building,” were also erected with exhibits devoted particularly to household items such as jams, cakes, embroidery and dresses.<sup>47</sup>

The white fair performed a boosterist function for the city of Macon and was used to advertise the prosperity of the region. The fair also was a public statement of white

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<sup>41</sup>*Macon News*, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1907.

<sup>42</sup>*Macon News*, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1907.

<sup>43</sup>*Macon News*, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1909.

<sup>44</sup>*Macon News*, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1909.

<sup>45</sup>*Macon News*, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1909.

<sup>46</sup>*Augusta Chronicle*, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1914.

<sup>47</sup>*Atlanta Constitution*, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1907.



superiority and control. I argue, however, that Georgia's black fair performed a boosterist function for the black community, publicly advertising the progress of the African American community and counteracting the negative images of African Americans within popular culture. In doing so, the black fair went beyond a recreational event as it elevated the activities of the black middle class and their efforts to uplift the black race within the social, political and economic system. The fair, therefore, demonstrated the limitations of racial uplift within a society which was repressed, yet also provided a unique space within which African Americans could challenge the multiple oppressions of racism.

Important themes emerge within this thesis, one of which is the contested relationship between black class strata and recreational spaces. The black fair highlighted internal class stratifications within the black community, demonstrating that many within the black elite did not want themselves to be considered as part of a homogeneous unit, and instead used different class delineations in order to elevate themselves and their activities socially. Ted Ownby has noted that "[e]lite blacks, like their white counterparts, often used culture as a tool to enhance their status and to more clearly distinguish their behavior and values from those of the lower classes. Repeatedly, therefore, entertainment became a battle ground in the struggle of the 'better' class of blacks for social validation."<sup>48</sup> The fair was one such arena that Georgia's African Americans were able to create and use, in order to further themselves socially within the repressive culture of the South, and the exclusion of the "lower" classes allowed them to do this.

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<sup>48</sup> Ownby cited in Goodson, *Highbrows, Hillbillies and Hellfire*, 144.

The thesis also brings to the forefront key historical figures, such as the black fair organiser and head-teacher of the Georgia State Industrial School in Savannah, Richard R. Wright, who played an important role in the local community-building efforts and helped further the needs of middle-class blacks in Georgia. Wright was an important figure in local and national politics, one whose influence is significant outside of the contemporary paradigms of black leadership, as characterised by W. E. B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington.<sup>49</sup> His efforts with the fair and within the fair create an additional aspect to this thesis which, in turn, point to studies made of similar individuals, like prominent black rights activist, James Coody Johnson, who was involved with organizing the Co-operative Negro Farmers Industrial State Fair in Oklahoma in 1919.<sup>50</sup>

The subject of the black fair emphasises wider problems in terms of black historical records and what has been deemed significant enough to archive. David Blight, Michael Kammen, John Bodnar and Robert Cook are among the historians who have discussed the inherent difficulties with black historic memory and forms of

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<sup>49</sup> Wright's educational contributions to Georgia have been discussed in June O. Patton, "Major Richard Robert Wright, Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia, 1880-1920" (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1980). Likewise Mitch Kachun has explored Wright's rhetoric of freedom in " 'A beacon to oppressed peoples everywhere': Major Richard R. Wright Sr; National Freedom Day, and the Rhetoric of Freedom in the 1940s", *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 128, No. 3 (July, 2004), pp. 279-306.

<sup>50</sup> David A. Chang, *The Color of the Land: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Landownership in Oklahoma, 1832-1929* (Chapel Hill: University North Carolina Press, 2010), 166.

commemoration within American society at large.<sup>51</sup> Brundage, in particular, has discussed the role of white women in constructing historical memory, one in which the “black past was acknowledged only when it seemed to validate the preferred white narrative”. Hence, records regarding black endeavours would not have been included in local, national or state archives.<sup>52</sup> In contrast to the Georgia State Fair records, which have been preserved, none of the records of the Negro State Fair Association have been archived. Archived material, therefore, also becomes imbued with racial significance, as black and white historical records have been treated differently. Subsequently a lack of evidence concerning black events makes it harder to attach significance to events, such as the fair, in present academic studies, perpetuating a cycle of neglect.

The lack of evidence resulted in an increased focus on methodology, as such ephemeral sources made it challenging to reconstruct the fair’s history. As the Negro State Fair Association’s own records were unavailable I have recreated the fair’s history using a combination of sources, such as government records, college newsletters and Washington’s personal correspondence. Subsequently, the small snippets of information in these sources gradually helped to build up a fuller picture of

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<sup>51</sup> David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001); Michael Kammen, *The Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993); Robert Cook, *Troubled Commemoration: The American Civil War Centennial, 1961-1965* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007).

<sup>52</sup> W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: University of Harvard Press, 2005), 33.

the black fair. One of the main sources I have used is Macon's white newspapers, which again are problematic because they have an inherent racial bias. When interpreting and selecting such sources, each newspaper was therefore treated with caution, and often silences in the reports were just as telling as what was recorded in print. Ultimately when and where possible I have tried to find black voices, and in doing so articulate the black experience. The fair after all was an African American event, and negotiating around white bias allows a clearer glimpse of the black thoughts and impulses that shaped the fair. Ones which, before now, have been lost within the historical record.

This thesis ultimately seeks to tackle such imbalances in our historical consciousness and redirect our attention towards forgotten spaces, such as the fair. Essentially, I argue that the fair served a specific political and social function for the black community and was a product of its social and historical context. The event is important as it illuminates the dynamics of black and white relations in southern communities during this period. The thesis similarly provides an insight into how politics and racial issues were conveyed at a grassroots level to black communities and individuals, demonstrating the efforts and interaction of black educators and leaders. Importantly this demonstrates how fairs created alternative arenas in which the African American community could manoeuvre within, and negotiate around, the restrictions imposed by the white community. Such spaces were vital as they sustained a sense of black achievement, civic recognition and self-preservation. The fair, therefore, stands as testimony to the ability, aspirations and work of southern African American communities who sought to lift themselves up in the face of overwhelming social repression and restrictions.

## Chapter One

### Accommodationism in Crisis: The Atlanta Riot of 1906 and the Founding of Georgia's Negro Fair

On September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1906, a few weeks before Macon's "Negro" fair first opened its gates, the already simmering racial tension in Atlanta erupted as white citizens initiated a brutal attack against local African American citizens. The ensuing riot raged for four days in downtown Atlanta, resulting in twenty-six deaths.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, in Macon, just under 85 miles away, the first Georgia black fair was being planned by members of the state's African American community. As a result of the Atlanta race riot, the black fair's existence in Macon became a "matter of serious regard" for city and county officials.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, although the riot had initially thrown the future of the fair into crisis, it was only a short period before the event was embraced as a vehicle through which to assert a sense of bi-racial reconciliation. The fair, therefore, took on a wider social and political significance, ceasing to be mere recreation and instead becoming a means to improve dangerously deteriorating race relations.

Because of the racial violence and tension which formed its backdrop the Georgia black fair became an arena within which blacks and whites could work together and further their own racial agendas. The policy of accommodationism came to the forefront at Georgia's black fair as a way in which to help establish peaceful social

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<sup>1</sup> David Fort Godshalk, *Veiled Visions: The Atlanta Race Riot and The Reshaping of American Race Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 106; Gregory Mixon, *The Atlanta Riot: Race, Class and Violence in a New South City* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005); Mark Bauerlein, *Negrophobia: A Race Riot in Atlanta 1906* (New York: Encounter Books, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1906.

interaction between blacks and whites after the Atlanta riot. In addition, differences of class within the black community began to shape the fair, defining it as an event predominantly serving the interests of an aspiring black middle class. Subsequently, the fair became a public model to exhibit the virtues of a black middle class whose respectability and attainment was supposed to represent what African Americans had, and could accomplish. The success of the fair in 1906 led to the event being held annually for the next thirteen years, with many of its founding tenets continuing to guide the organisers during these later years.

*The Effect of the 1906 Race Riot on Macon and on the White and Black State Fairs*

The Atlanta riot began in the early evening of Saturday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1906. Initially provoked by newspaper reports which had inflamed white fears regarding rumoured black sexual impropriety towards white women, the riot raged for four days within downtown Atlanta, where white men attacked black residents. According to historian John Dittmer, the police did little to stop the attacks, which quickly turned from beatings into the cold-blooded murder of African American citizens.<sup>3</sup> Well-dressed white crowds leaving theatres and bars cheered the murders and torture of black residents and even joined in the violence. By September 23<sup>rd</sup>, black residents had armed themselves against white attackers and the situation erupted into full-scale racial war. Tuesday night saw white citizens, reinforced by three state militia companies, enter black neighbourhoods, beating and arresting many male residents.<sup>4</sup> Finally,

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<sup>3</sup> John Dittmer, *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era 1900-1920* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1980), 125.

<sup>4</sup> Godshalk, *Veiled Visions*, 1.

however, the militia helped to quell the rioting. As the riot came under control, estimates of the death toll were made: 24 blacks and two whites. This, however, is considered to be an undercount as academic opinions regarding fatalities vary and white authorities often failed to keep accurate records of black deaths and injuries. Additionally, the death count obviously did not include the number of people injured in the riot, which totalled around sixty blacks and ten whites.<sup>5</sup>

The riot pointed to underlying tensions between blacks and whites created by increased economic competition. Gregory Mixon stresses that whites “were no longer willing to compete with African Americans for political power, public space, or jobs in a capitalist-controlled workplace that undercut the privileges of whiteness”.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the riot was spawned by frustrated lower-class whites taking out their anger at the economic threat embodied by black men.<sup>7</sup> David Fort Godshalk likewise notes in *Veiled Visions* that although the riot was exceptional for its excessive brutality and lengthy duration, it was not a departure from everyday racial struggles in Atlanta, only an intensification of longstanding conflicts within the city.<sup>8</sup> The presence of a cheering, well-dressed white crowd suggested that the violence was encouraged and applauded by wider sectors of Atlanta society.

On September 24<sup>th</sup>, news of the riot reached Macon. The front page of the local *Telegraph* was covered with excitable headlines which mirrored the hysteria and panic

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<sup>5</sup> This rivalry was mainly between newspaper rivals the *Atlanta Constitution* and the *Atlanta Journal*. Figures of the riot are taken from Godshalk, *Veiled Visions*, 106.

<sup>6</sup> Mixon, *The Atlanta Riot*, 27.

<sup>7</sup> Dittmer, *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era 1900-1920*, 131.

<sup>8</sup> Godshalk, *Veiled Visions*, 107.

apparent on the streets of Atlanta. The headlines declared that, “Maddened beyond all reason, ten thousand boys and young men attacked negroes in shops, on vehicles and street cars, slaying and wounding on their march of death and destruction.” Despite this statement blaming young whites for initiating the attack on blacks, other headlines created an alarmist and violent portrait of black retaliation. Such headlines exclaimed that, “Puddles of blood covered the floor”; “Negro women entered the fight like amazons” and that there were “rumors that negroes attack[ed] whites and storm[ed] cars”.<sup>9</sup> Such sensationalist language was aimed at inducing panic among the *Macon Telegraph*’s predominantly white readership. Comparisons of black women to amazons implied a savage and uncontrolled element within the riot, while revealing the involvement of African American females in defending their neighbourhoods and communities. At 4 o’clock that same day, as Macon residents learned of the riot, two troops of the town’s militia, the Macon Volunteers and the Floyd Rifles, were sent to Atlanta to help quell the violence. The interest Macon citizens had in their “sister city’s” riot was quickly apparent: when Macon’s militia boarded the train they were “joined by scores of people” and “the mob surged into the depot filling the lobby and overflowing into the streets.”<sup>10</sup> Tellingly, the governor ordered that one company be retained in Macon, suggesting that he had concerns about an outbreak of violence in the city.

The following day, the front page of the *Macon Telegraph* was again occupied with details of the riot. This time, the headlines were much more focused on rumoured atrocities committed by aggrieved black residents, stating for example that “Blacks

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<sup>9</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>10</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1906.



wreak vengeance on Guardians of the peace in the suburbs of Atlanta”. Other headlines followed suit, declaring that “School children [were] stoned by negroes” and “Three mounted officers [were] shot from ambush by Negroes”.<sup>11</sup> The panic and strife that defined Atlanta’s race relations were conveyed to Macon society through these newspaper reports with headlines further suggesting that the city was under siege by violent blacks who had now turned on all whites, even those who were trying to stem the violence. The mention of school children being attacked painted an image of a black community that was increasingly out of control and had started to attack “innocent” white inhabitants.

Macon’s history of race relations was similarly volatile and since emancipation there had been numerous incidents of racial violence. In 1866 Macon’s federal marshal was inundated with reports of clashes between former slaves and whites. Georgia’s whites reacted aggressively as blacks were granted the power to vote in 1867. In Macon three blacks were killed and eighteen injured when armed whites attacked a local African American church in an attempt to prevent black political activity.<sup>12</sup> Black rights were, however, increasingly being eroded through the House of Representatives. Blacks reacted angrily and during the election of 1872, Macon’s blacks protested by marching to the polls in military formation. Their stance was met by angry whites resulting in the deaths of one white and three black Maconites. This was not an isolated incident and problems continued throughout the 1870s and ‘80s, with Macon’s Ku Klux Klan

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<sup>11</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew M. Manis, *Macon: Black and White*, An Unutterable Separation in the American Century (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press and Tubman African American Museum, 2004), 17.

actively trying to stop any black who owned black property or participated in political activity.<sup>13</sup>

These problems had been compounded by social and economic dislocation experienced across America at large. Macon was an example of a southern city which had gone through rapid modernisation and was a microcosm of what Robert Wiebe has argued had happened on a national scale as the country emerged from the Civil War and Reconstruction. Wiebe states that “to almost all of the people who created them, these themes [of nationalisation, industrialisation, mechanisation, urbanisation] meant only dislocation and bewilderment. America in the late nineteenth century was a society without a core.”<sup>14</sup> Early twentieth century visitors to Macon would have experienced a blend of both rural and urban features as livestock roaming the city’s unpaved streets standing in stark contrast against the increasing numbers of automobiles and business initiatives. Between 1880 and 1890 the city added 110 factories which increased its manufacturing establishments by 815 per cent and its capital investments 454 per cent.<sup>15</sup> Consequently by the 1930s the high percentage of both blacks and whites working in “manufacturing and mechanical industries” demonstrated how Macon had progressed since the first half of the 1800s when the town had mainly been known for its agricultural and cotton production.<sup>16</sup> Macon contained an equal number of black and white workers, though whites outnumbered

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<sup>13</sup> Manis, *Macon: Black and White*, 19.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*, (New York, N.Y.: Hill & Wang, 1967), 12.

<sup>15</sup> George David Anderson, “A City Comes of Age: An Urban Study of Macon, Georgia, During the 1920s” (Unpublished PhD, Georgia College, 1975), 6.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

blacks in all major occupational groupings except domestic service in which the number of African American workers totalled 6,139 compared to only 825 whites.<sup>17</sup>

The rise of Macon's population and its burgeoning industry endeavours went hand in hand and following the Civil War the city attracted many rural Georgians through the promise of increased socioeconomic mobility. Rural to urban migration meant that Macon's population increased rapidly, shooting up from 23,272 to 40,665 between 1900 and 1910.<sup>18</sup> The black population had likewise grown exponentially and in the twenty years since 1890, the number of African Americans residing in Bibb County had increased by 4,145.<sup>19</sup> The problems encountered in Atlanta during the 1906 race riot therefore resonated with many white Maconites. Macon too was a city which had seen countless racial conflicts; it was also a community in which equal numbers of blacks and whites worked, and competed, for similar job positions. The rapid social and economic changes thus meant that many Maconites were quick to react to any perceived threat towards white supremacy and their way of life.

Fears of Atlanta's violence spreading across the state were founded when a riot occurred during Macon's 1906 white fair, demonstrating that racial tensions were becoming explosive outside of Georgia's capital city. On October 7<sup>th</sup>, *The New York Times* reported, at the Georgia Fair in Macon, "while negroes and whites were at side

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<sup>17</sup> "U.S. Census Reports: Unemployment Returns, 1930" (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1932) as found in Anderson, "A City Comes of Age", 92.

<sup>18</sup> Anderson, "A City Comes of Age" 8.

<sup>19</sup> In 1890 the total population of African Americans in Bibb County was 23,336. In 1910 this number increased to 27,481. "1890 and 1910 Census", University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/> (accessed 01.08.11).

shows at the fair here, a quarrel began which resulted in a general fight”.<sup>20</sup> The quarrel had started between Henry Fews, a black man, and Will Solomon and Charles Adams, two white men, on the midway of the fair at around 9.30pm. The fight had apparently started when Fews was knocked off his feet by a white man. As Fews regained his feet, Adams and Solomon were in the spot previously occupied by the unknown white man and “the angry negro” drew his revolver and fired a shot.<sup>21</sup> The newspaper further reported that, as a result of this quarrel, military companies were sent to the scene and “white citizens are rushing to the park”.<sup>22</sup> The incident at the fair demonstrates that racial tensions were high throughout the entire state and further accentuated due to the anxieties created by Atlanta’s riot. The eagerness of the whites to rush to the park and participate in mob activity suggests that Macon’s white citizens were on high alert and responded violently to any perceived black attack. Distorted newspaper reports of black brutality had helped initiate the white violence which triggered Atlanta’s riot and, similarly, the aggression of Macon’s white citizens was almost certainly a response to the sensationalist details of black violence conveyed through white newspaper reports detailing the riot. The young white men’s social standing would have also accounted for the white support they received following the attack, as they were both businessmen from prominent Macon families and their faces would have been familiar, if not known, to other members of the community. Subsequently the perceived threat of black violence would have resonated strongly with the local white

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<sup>20</sup>*The New York Times*, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>21</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>22</sup>*The New York Times*, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

community.<sup>23</sup> In addition, reports that the attack on both men was unprovoked would have again created further pretext for white outrage.

The fact that Fewes was carrying and also pulled out his gun when assaulted by a white man suggests that blacks were feeling under similar threat from white citizens. The violence of Atlanta's whites during the riot had alarmed Macon's black citizens who subsequently felt a need to arm themselves against volatile whites. If race relations had been bad in Atlanta alone, then Macon's black citizens would not have felt the need to arm themselves and the riot, therefore, revealed how easily such unstable relations could further deteriorate. The decision to arm, likewise, suggests that stories of white violence had filtered through from Atlanta to Macon's black community in the weeks following Atlanta's riot. This presented an alternative narrative to white newspaper reports of the riot which largely blamed the black community for initiating the riot.

The tensions at Macon's 1906 white state fair were picked up by other national publications, thereby conveying an image of fraught race relations in the South to northern readers. The front page of the *Washington Herald* detailed the arrival of the Georgia militia, which demonstrated the severity of the situation and showed the extent of the legal force needed to control the mob.<sup>24</sup> There had been incidents of black and white violence before, yet they had never needed a military response, again demonstrating that Atlanta's riot had heightened anxieties and emotions throughout the state. Macon's local paper emphasised the severity of the situation, stating that the "riot is becoming furious". Details of the violence illustrated how quickly the situation

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<sup>23</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1907.

<sup>24</sup>*Washington Herald*, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

had escalated and how perilously close Macon itself had come to erupting into a fully-fledged riot. When the African American assailant was arrested, “several hundred men and boys, the most of them boys, formed into a mob and followed the police wagon as it hurried from the grounds”. The local paper further described how two thirds of the mob went to the jail and “stormed it” and were confronted with the entire police force. In an attempt to calm the mob, Mayor Bridges Smith, some city officials and several ministers “were on hand pleading with the crowd to disperse”.<sup>25</sup> At midnight, the crowd were “still hammering at the jail” before they finally dispersed. The crowd’s actions at Macon’s jail mimicked lynch mobs across the South who often played an active role in punishing alleged assailants. W. Fitzhugh Brundage notes numerous incidents across the South when white mobs demanding “justice” dragged black prisoners from police custody in order to enforce their own bloody punishment, which often resulted in death. The actions of Macon’s white citizens were not unprecedented as, in 1886, white Maconites had stormed the city jail and lynched a rape suspect. Again, in 1892, armed blacks had congregated around the city jail in order to protect a black man, who was charged with the murder of a white man.<sup>26</sup> The quick mobilisation of supporters and the adoption of lynch mob behaviour displayed an established pattern of reaction towards community infractions. Macon’s citizens’ frenzied response and the size of the crowd subsequently questions whether they felt endangered by Fews’ attack or if they were already disposed to react violently to any hint of black transgression.

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<sup>25</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>26</sup> W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 94, 194.

On October 9<sup>th</sup>, the *Telegraph* reported that the two white men injured, despite their previously critical condition, were now “fast improving” whereas Fewes was dying in the Fulton Tower jail as the “result of four stabs [inflicted by the mob] he received before he could be hauled to the police station”.<sup>27</sup> The fleeting reference to his death at the hands of the white mob emphasises that white violence against blacks was commonplace. The disregard for Fewes’ murder at the hands of the white mob also indicates how fraught race relations were in the city in which Georgia’s black state fair would shortly be opening its gates for the first time.

*The Black Fair: Accommodationism in Crisis*

Atlanta’s race riot had thrown any concept of a peaceful black-white collaboration into turmoil, yet this cooperation was vital to the implementation and fulfilment of African American leader Booker T. Washington’s accommodationist strategy. Georgia’s black fair helped address a public crisis which occurred within accommodationism, as black and white relations were shown to have broken down following the 1906 riot. Washington’s appearance and speech at the fair in 1906 (and again in 1909) consolidated the ideological connection between the event and his strategy. Washington first espoused the theory during a speech entitled the “Atlanta Compromise”, which was delivered before a predominantly white audience at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta in 1895. In the speech, Washington stated that: “In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things

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<sup>27</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

essential to mutual progress.”<sup>28</sup> Louis R. Harlan argues that through this speech, “Washington offered to trade black acquiescence in disenfranchisement and some measure of segregation, at least for the time being, in return for a white promise to allow blacks to share in the economic growth that northern investment would bring.”<sup>29</sup> The strategy responded to a Protestant work ethic and doctrine of self-help, which emphasised “economics rather than politics and civil rights.”<sup>30</sup> Accommodationism therefore eschewed political violence and agitation, instead advocating trade and vocational work as a pathway to freedom.<sup>31</sup>

Accommodationism was not universally accepted and black discourse regarding its success was irrevocably divided once the riot had thrown open existing divisions surrounding the strategy. Consequently, following Atlanta’s violent outbreak, Washington’s policy, previously so attractive to many moderate whites and blacks, was thrown into a public crisis. Godshalk argues that Washington himself had anticipated this crisis as the “riot had radicalized African Americans and was encouraging even many of his once trusted allies to question the key assumptions underlying his strategy of accommodation.”<sup>32</sup> One of Washington’s most vocal opponents was W. E. B. Du Bois, whose poetic response to the Atlanta riot, *A Litany of Atlanta*, “directly refuted

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<sup>28</sup> Booker T. Washington, “The Atlanta Compromise” in Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee 1901-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), viii.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> August Meier, “Negro Class Structure and Ideology in the Age of Booker T. Washington”, *Phylon*, Vol. 23, No.3 (3rd Quarter, 1962), 259.

<sup>31</sup> Washington embodied this philosophy through his involvement with the Tuskegee Institute, a black vocational school which taught African Americans various industrial skills.

<sup>32</sup> Godshalk, *Veiled Visions*, 121.



Washington's doctrine that black morals and economic progress might protect African Americans from mobs".<sup>33</sup>

Washington's strategy incurred considerable opposition from within the African American community, even before the riot. In the month following the "Atlanta Compromise", black spokesperson Bishop Henry McNeal Turner stressed how Washington's words would be "quoted by newspapers, magazines, periodicals, legislatures, congressmen, lawyers, judges and all grades of whites to prove that the Negro race is satisfied with being degraded."<sup>34</sup> Du Bois likewise criticised Washington and instead urged African Americans to agitate publicly for black political representation.<sup>35</sup> In 1909, Du Bois co-founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which was formed in response to the desire to agitate for "every right that belongs to a free-born American – political, civil and social."<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Washington's endorsement of black industrial education frequently came under attack and national black publications such as *The Voice* blamed him for the stymieing of black progress, stating that "Civility is not servility. The will-o-wisp bogs of Negro industrial supremacy lead to the bogs and quick sands of a very narrow and

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Henry McNeal Turner, "Critique of the Atlanta Compromise", *The Voice of Missions*, October, 1895, in Edwin S. Redkey (ed.), *Respect Black: The Writings and Speeches of Henry McNeal Turner* (New York: Arno Press Inc. and The New York Times, 1971), 166.

<sup>35</sup> Originally published in *The Crisis*, the official organ of the NAACP cited in Zhang Juguo, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Quest for the Abolition of the Color Line* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 69-70.

<sup>36</sup> Gilbert Jonas, *Freedom's Sword: The NAACP and the Struggle Against Racism in America 1909-1969* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 10.

festered life”.<sup>37</sup> Academics such as Kathleen Clark have since argued that Washington’s endorsement of industrial education for blacks was often seized upon by southern white officials in order to train students for agricultural and domestic work, “while refusing to support programs designed to prepare African Americans for a broader range of pursuits, including the professions of law, medicine, and higher education.”<sup>38</sup>

Despite such criticism, accommodationism was in many ways a potentially radical policy, as it offered the possibility for African Americans to earn full civil and political liberties and social integration if they proved themselves to be hardworking and moral citizens. On a local and communal level the fair was one striking example of how accommodationism peacefully granted Georgia’s African Americans an autonomous public space within the white dominated terrain of the South. White pressure and expectations wielded considerable influence on the black fair. Similarly white involvement and sanction of the event illustrated how the use of accommodation successfully generated white support for select black ventures. Embraced as an acceptable or, one might argue, the only response accepted by both black and elite white southerners, accommodationism could be confirmed as a bi-racial tool for creating peaceable relations. Post-revisionist interpretations of Booker T. Washington have recognised the inherent difficulties contained in the pursuit of black uplift within white dominated communities at the time. As Louise Newman states, “[r]eassessing Washington’s public activities means fully apprehending the harsh realities that Washington faced: not just the violence of white mobs or the discriminatory policies of

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<sup>37</sup>*The Voice*, December 1906, 537.

<sup>38</sup> Kathleen Clark, *Defining Moments: African American Commemoration and Political Culture in the South, 1863-1913* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 192.

white politicians.”<sup>39</sup> Accommodationism, as advocated by Washington, therefore became a useful tool with which to gain black privilege. The riot therefore not only created a crisis in accommodationism but also, ironically, thrust the strategy further into the public arena.

Atlanta’s riot cast the existence of the black fair into doubt, although it had been arranged well before October. In the immediate wake of the disturbance, Macon’s city and county officials initially announced that the black fair would not be held. This decision, which was made “when the excitement was feverish and the situation precarious,” was, however, quickly reversed when, as the *Telegraph* reported, the city had “settled down to its normal condition.”<sup>40</sup> The fair, in fact, offered a forum in which the strategy of accommodationism could be publicly endorsed by black and white leaders, many of whom were eager to embrace a sense of racial cooperation in order to prevent further racial tension.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, many African American leaders distanced themselves from public militancy by adopting a white-centred vision of order. Godshalk argues that “white civic and business leaders promised to prevent renewed white racial violence”. Consequently, “they selectively funded the institution-building efforts of accommodative blacks”.<sup>42</sup> The black fair became an institution assisted by whites that also built upon the premise of accommodationism.

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<sup>39</sup> Louise Newman, “Moving Beyond the Accommodation/Resistance Divide: Race and Gender in the Discourse of Booker T. Washington” in Brundage (ed.), *Booker T. Washington and Black Progress*, 178.

<sup>40</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>41</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1906.

<sup>42</sup> Godshalk, *Veiled Visions*, 2.

Before the gates of the black fair had opened, Macon's white residents had started to reflect on the riot in Atlanta and, similarly, upon race relations within Macon itself. One such resident was Dr J. L. White of Macon's First Baptist Church, who forcefully outlined the lessons that he felt should be learnt from the Atlanta race riot to his Sunday morning congregation, a sermon shared with *Telegraph* readers the following day. White declared, "we are no better than our neighbour Atlanta" and that the streets of Macon needed a "physical and moral cleansing."<sup>43</sup> The pastor's words drew together many of the themes that characterised white and black responses to the riot and corresponded with the interpretation of accommodationism employed within the black state fair.

Following the riot, stratifications were applied to distinguish between various black institutions and forms of recreation. In Atlanta, white authorities and newspapers had stressed that black immorality and violence stemmed from recreational spaces which had created a "meeting place of the Negro degenerate" and were essentially "incubators of mischief and vice".<sup>44</sup> In his sermon, White similarly linked the black lower class with inferior establishments which existed outside the law, and urged a mass meeting in order to persuade Macon's city council to abolish "negro saloons", which he pointed to as one of the causes of the riot. White further stated that, "There are on Fourth and Popular Streets and Cotton Avenue, between New and Popular Street, hell brothels, bars, restaurants and dance halls, which are breeding fiends and law breakers."<sup>45</sup> White's sermon was certainly influenced by the Atlanta riot as white authorities had

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<sup>43</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1906.

<sup>44</sup> Bauerlein, *Negrophobia*, 136.

<sup>45</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1906.

also claimed black criminality had resulted from the city's saloons. The fair contrasted positively with these forms of black recreation and thus ensured support from the white community. A charter from Chatham County Superior Court, granting permission for the black fair to be conducted, demonstrates how the black fair was recognised as a legitimate form of entertainment under state legislation.<sup>46</sup> This differentiated the event legally from other forms of black recreation, such as the illegal saloons and dance halls, which were outside of white elite supervision.<sup>47</sup> White's words illustrate how the riot supported a white rationale which justified controlling leisure sites connected with the black lower classes. White indicated how influential white sanction was in allowing and controlling the recreational spaces of the black community, whilst similarly stressing how class distinctions generated the white approval and legal permission that allowed the fair to be held.

While pointing to lower-class establishments and a perceived lower class that frequented them, in the same breath, White embraced the possibility of a black and white "friendship" with "colored neighbours".<sup>48</sup> He therefore made the issue class-based, creating a way to move forward following the riot, as this distinction between an assumed lower and higher class of African American allowed white citizens to

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<sup>46</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1910. This is indicative of why the black fair stopped in 1916 for a period of a year and then was resumed, as the legal documents for the white fair ran for a period of ten years, which likewise suggests that the legal paperwork for the African American fair would have similarly expired after a ten-year period. Details for the length of the contract for the white fair can be found in the Minutes of the Georgia State Fair Association, 1909-1911, September 23<sup>rd</sup> 1910, p. 305, Georgia State Fair Association Collection, Washington Memorial Library, Macon, Box 11, Folder, 90A.

<sup>47</sup> Mixon, *The Atlanta Riot*, 39.

<sup>48</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1906.

apportion blame to one sector of the African American community for causing the riot, while, at the same time, creating a racial partnership with another.

These stratifications were in many ways both imposed upon, and imposed by, the black community. Godshalk notes how “many black elites sought safety in the midst of the riot by highlighting their shared racial affiliations with working-class blacks only to publicly emphasize intra-racial divisions during its aftermath.”<sup>49</sup> The implicit class distinctions promoted within the strategy of accommodationism were, therefore, further consolidated in the dialogues which emerged following the riot. Mixon argues that in the aftermath of the incident, “Black leaders hoped that whites might at last recognize the class differences among blacks in Atlanta and distinguish ‘law abiding’ blacks from the ‘criminal elements’ of both races.”<sup>50</sup> This meant that class status could be embraced by middle-class blacks as a means by which to repair the damage of the riot and distinguish themselves from black rioters.

Middle-class black uplift, supported and contained by white involvement, encapsulated the very essence of black accommodation at the fair. The distinctions employed by those in charge of the fair were pivotal to its survival as they courted the white sanction needed in order for the fair to continue. Constructs of the “Good Negro” versus the “Bad Negro” were widely promoted by various white newspapers following the riot. For instance, the *Atlanta Constitution* asserted that Macon’s “colored” fair only went ahead because a “Better Class of Race Wanted the Exposition”. The newspaper further emphasised this Good/Bad divide by stating that “Worthless Blacks Will Be Kept

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<sup>49</sup> Godshalk, *Veiled Visions*, 8.

<sup>50</sup> Mixon, *The Atlanta Riot*, 117.

Out”.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, the fair was only initially held as “the action of those in charge of the fair has been so commendable as to share public opinion in their favour.”<sup>52</sup>

The fair, which was organised and run by the black community, was an example of how, through accommodationism, white authorities “offered a small group of black elites a nominal influence over municipal affairs”.<sup>53</sup> The fair was the initiative of Richard Robert Wright and was established during Wright’s time as headmaster of the Georgia State Industrial College (GSIC) in Savannah, Georgia.



1. Sketch of R. R. Wright, *Atlanta Independent*, 1909.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, October 12<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>52</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>53</sup> Godshalk, *Veiled Visions*, 2.

<sup>54</sup> *Atlanta Independent*, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1909.

As early as 1880 Wright was considered to be part of a rising group of ex-slaves in Augusta, Georgia, and he had previously served as the founding principal of the first black high school in Augusta.<sup>55</sup> During this period Wright also founded the state-wide black teachers' association, while also editing its newspaper. He additionally worked alongside the Republican Party on both a state and national level.<sup>56</sup> Wright was considered to be "one of the leading educators of the South, and a great promoter of industrial ideas", essentially embodying many ideas on black achievement and uplift.<sup>57</sup> In 1919 Wright admitted to a committee on appropriations at the House of Representatives that "I have been identified with the uplift of our people for quite a little while."<sup>58</sup>

The African American fair was utilised as a public platform from which black leaders promoted and projected a positive impression of black middle-class respectability. This constructed image sought to repair the damage done to race relations and to the image of the black community. Issues of social ranking were, therefore, inherent to accommodationism as in order to advocate black uplift, there was a need to define a lower class against which black progress could be measured. Kevin Gaines has stressed that by using the "very existence of a 'Better class' of blacks", middle-class African

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<sup>55</sup> Meier, "Negro Class Structure and Ideology in the Age of Booker T. Washington", 265.

<sup>56</sup> Francille Rusan Wilson, "Introduction" in Elizabeth Ross Hayes, *The Black Boy of Atlanta* [1952] (New York: G. K. Hall, 1997), xxxiii.

<sup>57</sup> *Atlanta Independent*, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1909.

<sup>58</sup> General Deficiency Bill, Hearings conducted by the subcommittee Messrs J. J. Fitzgerald (chairman), Charles L. Bartlett, Thomas U. Sisson, Joseph G. Cannon, and Frederick H. Gillett of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, in charge of deficiencies for the fiscal year 1912 and prior years. Statement of Richard R. Wright, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1912, 4.



Americans “sought to rehabilitate the race’s image by embodying respectability, enacted through an ethos of service to the masses”.<sup>59</sup> For many black leaders, this sense of respectability, intertwined with self-help, was integral to the perpetuation of the African American middle class within the public arena and came to influence the black fair.

The black and white community, not surprisingly, interpreted black class distinctions in different ways. In the context of the black fair, white commentators employed simple polemical images of the “good Negro” versus the “bad Negro” and associated class distinctions with behaviour.<sup>60</sup> Black speakers at the fair frequently interpreted and intertwined class with economic positions, condemning the “loafer” and the “tramp” as part of this lower class.<sup>61</sup> Class stratifications employed in accommodationism, therefore, bound racial uplift specifically to an economically aspiring black middle class and there was a distinct stratum of black professionals, educators and entrepreneurs who were involved with the fair. Meier states that during this period new upwardly mobile, middle-class men found Washington’s ethos of racial solidarity and self-help congenial to their own interests and experience. By connecting social status with economics, the black middle class was able to appropriate “symbols of American individualism and social Darwinism to explain and rationalize their role”.<sup>62</sup> It created a “moral economy”

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<sup>59</sup>Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, xiv.

<sup>60</sup>*Atlanta Constitution*, October 12<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>61</sup>*Atlanta Constitution*, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>62</sup> Meier, “Negro Class Structure and Ideology in the Age of Booker T. Washington”, 266.

which furthered perceived social, economic and ethical demarcation between themselves and a “lower” black class.<sup>63</sup>

Accommodationism did not then encompass the collective black community, but instead demonstrated wider social and ideological fragmentations. Because of such class complexities, when discussing the fair’s African American visitors and organisers, I will apply Michele Mitchell’s definition of the “aspiring black class” when using the term “black middle class” as it is directly related to the social elevation promised through accommodationism’s ideology of uplift. As Mitchell states, this term likewise “differentiates African American strivers from contemporaneous middle-class white Americans”, whilst also acknowledging the quickening of class stratifications within African American communities.<sup>64</sup>

It is likely that whites used their association with the fair in order to perpetuate these internal divisions within the black community, since the event offered a black public space where whites could insert themselves into the proceedings. The joining of black elites and working classes during the Atlanta riot had “reinforced feelings of intra-racial strength and solidarity amongst most blacks, so too did it suggest the limited ability of whites to extend their power and influence beyond Atlanta’s public spaces into the African American worlds behind Jim Crow’s veil.”<sup>65</sup> White authorities could, therefore, grant the privilege of the fair to a specific class of African American which meant that a

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<sup>63</sup> Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 17.

<sup>64</sup> Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2004), xx.

<sup>65</sup> Godshalk, *Veiled Visions*, 113.

perceived “lower” class would not be included within the fair and would be shunned by the black aspiring classes. By only granting the fair to a specific black class, white middle-class citizens could forge a relationship to foster better community relations following the riot. Desires to establish an amicable bi-racial relationship also made it harder for aspiring blacks to include lower classes within dialogues concerning the fair, or even want to include them, as their presence threatened this continued white approval.

Accommodationism became associated with influential and business-class whites, a sector of the community which would benefit most from the industrial support offered by black workers. Because this sector had marked economic interests that were promoted through accommodationism, they endorsed a *petit bourgeois* programme which stressed “non-union manual and agricultural labor as well as vocational education for the toiling masses”.<sup>66</sup> This, in the long term, ensured the supply of black labour that helped maintain white industries. The fair’s emphasis on black industrial and agricultural vocations, therefore, appealed to elite and business-class whites for the same reasons. In 1906, fair exhibits sought to display the “varied work of the farm products and industrial work of the negroes of the state”.<sup>67</sup> Reports of Macon’s black fair similarly emphasised the importance of displaying what they deemed to be the “chief negro industries”.<sup>68</sup> It was, therefore, in the best interests of white elites to support a degree of limited black uplift, as seen through the fair.

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<sup>66</sup> Waldo Martin, “In Search of Booker T. Washington: Up from Slavery, History and Legend” in W. Fitzhugh Brundage (ed.), *Booker T. Washington and Black Progress: Up from Slavery 100 Years Later* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 48.

<sup>67</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1906.

<sup>68</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1907.

Just as black class divisions emerged following the riot, so they also appeared within Atlanta's white community. The inherent paradox of accommodationism was that black advancement exacerbated white fears of increased racial equality. White hierarchy was especially important for lower-class whites as, while slavery had previously served to divide white indentured servants and labourers from black slaves, following abolition class lines had become blurred, and many lower-class whites were in direct competition with blacks for jobs. White elites supported accommodationism as they were less threatened by displays of black progress, as it did not encroach upon their economic or social standing. Similarly, middle-class whites knew that in a society which was inherently unequal, the black middle class could not live on equal terms with the white middle class because Jim Crow restricted their social and economic mobility. The riot had, however, shown how lower-class whites were unwilling to tolerate black social progress and the random violence of the mob made the "friendship" between white businessmen and the aspiring black middle classes problematic. In response, business-class whites renewed their commitment towards the strategy of accommodationism and elevated it as a tool for reducing racial friction. To embrace elite white and middle class black collaborative efforts, Atlanta's white elites also stressed class divisions, asserting that the mob had been composed of "white trash" who had punished the "best of blacks for sins of the worthless few."<sup>69</sup>

White elites helped consolidate this bond by emphasising a sense of historical continuity, from slavery to present, which existed between themselves and the black

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<sup>69</sup> Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black/ White Relations in the South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 222.

community. This relationship thus transcended the setbacks of the rioting in Atlanta. By playing on a disingenuous sense of loyalty, white elites were again able to exclude lower-class whites from their relationship with the black community. Joel Williamson asserts that this exclusionism allowed white elites to emphasise a stronger relationship with blacks as they claimed, “White trash hated Negroes while their late masters loved them...and jealousy led the lower order to hate the best of the colored people with double strength.”<sup>70</sup> This stance not only stressed the difference between the paternalistic former slave-owning white elite and the violent lower classes but also sought to prevent the possibility of the black middle class seeking out a social or political alliance with lower white classes, one which might threaten the interests of the white business elite.

Paternalism similarly helped to lessen the threat of black progress as the relationship rested on the premise that blacks deferred to white authority, which automatically limited black agency by allowing elite white involvement in African American affairs. Paternalism, as understood by white civic leaders during this time, was best defined by the assertion of white lawyer, Charles T. Hopkins, at a public meeting in Atlanta following the 1906 race riot. He stated that “[t]he Negro race is a child race. We are a strong race, their guardians. We have boasted of our superiority and we have now sunk to this level, we have shed the blood of our helpless wards. Christianity and humanity demand that we treat the Negro fairly.”<sup>71</sup> Paternalism was intrinsic to white interpretations of accommodationism and had gained momentum in the aftermath of the riot. Williamson argues that this sense of paternalism was again linked to a need to

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1906; *Atlanta Journal*, September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1906, quoted in Godshalk, *Veiled Visions*, 138.

maintain a rigid sense of the colour line between the rising black middle class and whites. He stresses that, in the decade from 1907, “[there] came a resurgence of the image of the black child, as neo-Sambo, appealing and appalling again, but most of all needing the helping hand of patrician and paternal whites to hold a place in the society.”<sup>72</sup> Paternalism again provided a way in which white citizens could embrace racial collaborations, such as the fair, without treating blacks as equal.

In Macon, following the Atlanta riot, Dr White similarly projected an image of black-white relationships in Macon as being reliant on white paternalism which again was only granted to a particular sector of the black community. He urged white men to act, but framed white action in terms of a moral responsibility towards the African American, declaring: “the negro is the Southern white man’s burden. He is with us to stay.”<sup>73</sup> White’s sentiment and tone echoed those of Hopkins’, stating that, “as the stronger race, the white man must become the guardian of his weaker brother in black.”<sup>74</sup> White similarly sought to “assure the negroes among us that we are their friends”. He questioned if the black community could even doubt this friendship, stating that the militia were called out to protect them after they were “the objects of the mob’s wrath.” White further stressed that “[w]ere there occasion every military man in Macon would shoulder his gun and march to Pleasant Hill, a negro community, or any lowly negro hut to protect him against the hand of the violent.”<sup>75</sup> White’s words offered a response to Atlanta’s riot which, whilst admitting there had been violence, emphasised

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<sup>72</sup> Joel Williamson, *A Rage for Order: Black/White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 151.

<sup>73</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1906.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1906.

the protection afforded to black citizens by white authorities. White went on to assert that the southern gentleman was “the best friend” the black had. By categorizing Macon’s white men as “gentlemen”, he reinforced a specific paternalistic image of white men that differentiated them from more violent factions.<sup>76</sup> White’s implication, that Macon’s white community could be included amongst those who would protect black citizens, was contradicted when a white mob later prevailed at Macon’s white state fair.

Paternalistic benevolence had marked economic considerations for the white community. While White had urged the “white men of Macon [to] help [their] colored neighbour bear his burdens”, he had also argued to “[s]ave him from his enemies and in saving him know that you are safe-guarding your home.”<sup>77</sup> White, therefore, appealed to his listeners’ enlightened principles, failing which he pointed out the pragmatism of helping the black community. White’s words stressed underlying economic considerations as they emphasised that white benevolence would protect white property and it was, therefore, in the self-interest of whites to promote better race relations. In fact, during Atlanta’s riot, factories and businesses had been forced to close, halting the flow of production and also creating a bad impression with northern investors. Godshalk argues that the damaged property and devastating national publicity had “emphasised to white civic leaders and businesspersons the insupportable costs of racial violence.”<sup>78</sup> The black fair was, therefore, quickly embraced by the white business community in

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1906.

<sup>78</sup> Godshalk, *Veiled Visions*, 111.

Macon as a way to prevent further racial problems and, by association, help promote industrial productivity.

In contrast to white paternalistic interpretations of accommodationism, Washington instead promoted black industrial vocations and training as a way in which African Americans could share in the South's increasing economic growth. He likewise touted the ideology as being the most prudent method for black self-improvement, thereby appealing to an aspiring sector of the black community.<sup>79</sup> The fair provided a space to display publicly the benefits of uplift and accommodationism to both the black and white community. Postcards were sent out urging people to come to the event and images of a small black boy next to an American flag saying, "Tell 'em we are rising" connected the ideology of the fair with national concepts of black uplift and progress.<sup>80</sup> Various 'trade' organisations were also involved with the fair including members of the Negro Farmers Congress, the Mechanic Conference and the Georgia Agricultural and Industrial Association, explicitly connecting the fair with black industrial and occupational endeavours.<sup>81</sup>

A collective display of black trade associations became more significant in the aftermath of the riot as they displayed similar industrial occupations to those which had been the source of economic competition between working-class whites and blacks in Atlanta. If, as Godshalk, Mixon and other historians argue, the riot was the product of lower-class whites' animosity towards blacks because of competition for jobs, then the

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<sup>79</sup> Washington, "Atlanta Compromise", viii.

<sup>80</sup> Elizabeth Ross Haynes, *The Black Boy of Atlanta* [1952] (New York: G. K. Hall, 1997), 367.

<sup>81</sup> Patton, "Major Richard Robert Wright, Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia, 1880-1920", 510.



very premise of black uplift contained within the fair was itself a contentious issue. The fair endorsed a sense of black economic and employment opportunity, which had underpinned the causes of the riot, and the paternalistic support of the white business community in the venture meant the black community could theoretically celebrate that uplift without the threat of white violence. Considering how tense race relations were in Macon, black citizens may not have felt they had many avenues open to them which would help maintain a peaceful rapport with the white community. Previous events at Macon's white fair had demonstrated the eagerness of the city's white citizens to subdue any black threat and the dangers of black disorder had been painfully demonstrated by the death of Fewes at the hands of Macon's own white mob. The fair was a peaceable means of promoting black recognition and achievement within the public sphere.

The fair similarly helped to endorse Macon as a city in which race relations were undisturbed following the riot, a place where industry could continue to flourish. Mayor Bridges Smith wrote in an open letter to the community "with a view to promoting the success" of the black fair, "Macon has the reputation of being a peaceful city, and it may be said that nowhere in Georgia is there more cordial or more peaceful relations existing between the races." He concluded by urging citizens to aid encouragement of the venture.<sup>82</sup> His letter shows that the success of the fair would help restore and promote an image of Macon as a racially harmonious city. The state-wide campaign conducted by the organisers and the *Atlanta Constitution* would have likewise performed a boosterist function for Macon. Several groups of three or four black male students from GSIC were sent out to nearby counties and adjacent states to promote the

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<sup>82</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

fair.<sup>83</sup> The behaviour of the group was important in highlighting the respectability of the fair and the conduct of the black community involved with the event. The canvass of support was turned into an accommodationist lesson which tested and encouraged individual self-sufficiency and each boy was given no money and just enough food for one meal, with Wright telling them: “If he couldn’t make the trip better than anybody else, he had better quit.”<sup>84</sup> Each group was told to act with “neatness and dispatch” whilst on trains, and on their return to write a report and read it at one of the chapel exercises.<sup>85</sup> The canvassing promoted Macon, the fair’s organisers and the students of GSIC to blacks and whites throughout the state, as moderate and progressive, standing in stark contrast to Atlanta during October 1906.

Macon’s white business community was highly influential in urging the city council to allow the black fair to commence. Newspaper reports stated that several of the merchants “who have been approached on the subject, favour the enterprise as an encouragement to the colored race as well as from a business standpoint.”<sup>86</sup> They aimed to benefit economically from the large crowds of African Americans visiting the fair from neighbouring counties, which would increase city revenue and publicise their own businesses. Jim Crow restrictions meant that there could be no integrated accommodation or eating facilities, but white merchants and railroad companies would have profited from black presence within the city. It was, therefore, again in the interests of the white business community to encourage the venture. When the fair’s fate was being decided, “a petition asking that the council do not rescind their action signed

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<sup>83</sup> Haynes, *Black Boy of Atlanta*, 364.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

by one hundred and fifty merchants was read before action was taken on the report,” no doubt influencing the 7 to 4 vote in favour of the fair being held.<sup>87</sup>

The tensions exhibited in Atlanta, and indeed at Macon’s white fair only a few weeks previously, still appeared to be in the forefront of the fair organisers’ and the Macon city council’s minds as practical steps were taken to avert any further violence. There was a rumour that if Booker T. Washington spoke at the fair then he would not leave Macon alive. Whilst Wright publicly “laughed at [these fears],” privately he secured “a strong guard and was thoroughly prepared” for the worst.<sup>88</sup> There was clearly a sense of unease regarding any racial interaction at the black fair on behalf of the white community. The *Telegraph* stated that, “there will be no occasion for whites to visit the fair, except for those who wish to see what can be accomplished by the negro, and this visiting will be done more on ‘White Folks Day’”.<sup>89</sup> The decision to restrict white visitors’ attendance was a more informal racial segregation, however, even though it limited the movements of white citizens, such rules did not have the same implications for whites as Jim Crow regulations did for blacks. Despite being intended to ensure white safety, the exclusion of whites also helped enforce the sense that the fair was a black event.

An increased emphasis on policing also accompanied the black fair, which indicated that white authorities and organisers feared trouble when the races interacted within the fairgrounds. Originally, the fair was going to be policed by a “force of good

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<sup>87</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>88</sup> Patton, “Major Richard Robert Wright, Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia, 1880-1920”, 512.

<sup>89</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

negroes”<sup>90</sup> with white policemen only being on hand during “White Folks’ Day”.<sup>91</sup> Eventually, the white authorities and the City Council took the decision to police Macon’s 1906 black fair themselves.<sup>92</sup> Their decision conveyed the general sense of unease that the white community had over blacks regulating themselves and whites not having any legal force within the event. On a deeper level it spoke about white anxieties regarding an African American type of militia, which, by association, would have meant that blacks would have also carried some form of weapon and potentially used them against whites.<sup>93</sup>

The mayor himself recognised the possibility for racial agitation at the fair, but stated that, “there is no reason why there should be the least friction. It is a fair given by the negroes for the negroes. Of course, there will be many white visitors who are interested in the displays and who wish to encourage them by their presence, but none will visit the attractions of the midway.”<sup>94</sup> The decision to segregate the midway at the African American fair essentially sought to lessen the mingling of the races at more dubious “immoral” type of entertainments and similarly reflected the fear created by the shooting at the white fair’s midway earlier that month. As the midway was dedicated to amusement rides, which normally stayed open till late and had already been the site of violent behaviour, it made sense that organisers focused their attentions on this section as a problem area. It also subtly acknowledged that blacks needed protection from violent whites as it was the white community who were restricted from the midway. If

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> *Augusta Chronicle*, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>93</sup> White fears regarding images of black militia and mobilisation are discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>94</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

the black community had themselves been such a violent and erratic force, then it is doubtful they would have been allowed on the midway at all, let alone interact with any white ride operators. Conversely, by creating such racial separation at the fair it also lessened the threat of interracial contact, again helping to uphold black and white separate spheres.

When the black fair did finally open its gates, it was the first one of its kind in Georgia. The uniqueness of the venture explains why it attracted state-wide attention following the riot. Macon, along with other prominent cities, had hosted Georgia's annual state fair with specific "Negro Days" and "Negro buildings" which meant that African Americans had been on the margins of specifically white fairs and expositions in Georgia for a number of years. Additionally, when blacks had participated, it was often to help promote the industriousness of the region, ultimately perpetuating white economic interests. Ruth M. Winston's study, "Negro Participation in Southern Expositions, 1881-1915", states that, starting in 1881, African Americans played an important role in Georgia's expositions, helping to call attention to the region's population, resources and produce.<sup>95</sup> Such expositions, however, did not aim to further solely black interests or provide a black recreational space.

There had been occasional county fairs within Georgia that offered a more black-orientated recreational space in the past. Indeed, during the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Wright had been involved in organising black county fairs, one of which was held in connection with the school where he was teaching during the summer, in his

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<sup>95</sup> Ruth M. Winston, "Negro Participation in Southern Expositions, 1881-1915", *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Winter, 1947), 34-43.

hometown of Cuthbert, Georgia. This fair was a forerunner of Georgia's black state fair and shared similar agricultural elements. At Cuthbert's county fair, "negro farmers bought bushels of great, long ears of corn, peas, peaches, peanuts, potatoes; horses and cattle. The women came too with turkeys, chickens, eggs, butter, lye-hominy and beautiful log cabin quilts."<sup>96</sup>

"Negro Days", held during the white state fair, offered one of the few recreational options to blacks in the years before the black fair. There was often a "Negro Building", which displayed the industrial exhibits of local black schools. During 1899's Negro Day, two of Atlanta University's graduates delivered speeches and Wright spoke about the "Negro in History" while Reverend L. B. Maxwell discussed "The Negro of To-Day".<sup>97</sup> The sporadic nature of such days nonetheless marked the state fair as a white sanctioned event that was never fully institutionalised. However, when the black fair opened, "Negro Days" at the white fair became less frequent before they became redundant and stopped altogether.

Macon's 1906 black fair established a unique black recreational and agricultural event. The black community were eager for the fair to be held and "[p]rominent men in every part of the state [were] writing offering support" for the venture.<sup>98</sup> The *Macon Telegraph* declared that, "Numerous county fairs have been held, and space has been assigned to negroes at many of the fairs given by the State Agricultural Society, but this

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<sup>96</sup> Haynes, *Black Boy of Atlanta*, 354.

<sup>97</sup> *University of Atlanta Bulletin*, November 1899, No. 104, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center, Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>98</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1906.

is the first entirely under their own control.”<sup>99</sup> The black fair was held directly following the end of the white state fair and ran, on average, for a period of ten days. When Macon’s “Negro fair” first opened its gates on November 12th, newspaper reports show that, superficially, it shared similar types of entertainment and organisational and exhibition features with the white fair, though on a smaller scale. Features included agricultural, school and mechanical exhibits, women’s handiwork, parades, horse races and a midway, which featured fireworks, a spiral tower, balloon ascensions, parachute jumps and performances.<sup>100</sup> In addition, there were moving pictures and brass bands as well as bicycle and foot races, showing a wealth of recreational events.<sup>101</sup>

The attending crowd was composed of African Americans from throughout the state of Georgia and organisers named specific days at the fair after surrounding counties. For example, Wednesday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1906, was devoted to Columbus, Americus and Albany, which helped to encourage African Americans who lived in those cities to attend.<sup>102</sup> This strategy served to include black communities whose own counties did not host fairs. The 1906 fair was well publicised throughout the state, with more than \$2,000 spent on advertising, and subscribers were scattered throughout the state.<sup>103</sup> Advertisements for the fair normally appeared on billboards and fences with large

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<sup>99</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>100</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1906. All of which were common aspects of state fairs in general during this period. These can be seen in newspaper reports from the *Macon News*, *Augusta Chronicle*, *Atlanta Independent* and *Macon Telegraph* which detail events at Macon’s white state fair and the black fair during this period.

<sup>101</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>102</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1906.

<sup>103</sup>*Macon Telegraph*. October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

posters on the side of barns and other buildings.<sup>104</sup> Newspaper advertisements also indicated that the railway companies offered a discount on railway tickets to travel to and from the fair.

The influence and involvement of Booker T. Washington helped to consolidate the success of the event. His presence physically endorsed accommodationist ideology within the fair-grounds.<sup>105</sup> The presence of Washington, given his well-documented stance on racial accommodation, helped to quash the threat of any black radicalism or disorder at the fairs for white citizens. The continuation of the black fair depended on disassociating itself from a specific “degenerate”, black lower-class element. Washington utilised class-infused rhetoric when he spoke at the fair, insisting: “there is no class of people that is doing more harm to our race just now than the loafer, the tramp, the man who spends his time idling around the street corners, bar rooms or dirty dives.”<sup>106</sup> Washington’s statement distanced the middle class black community from a perceived “lower” class of African American. In doing so, it again separated the institution of the “Negro fair” from the types of establishment that this seeming lower class frequented, as referred to in White’s sermon earlier the same month.

When discussing his appearance at Macon’s black fair in a letter to William Jennings Bryan in 1907, Washington relayed his “pleasure of speaking at the State Fair”, praising the progress he saw. Washington told Bryan that not only was the fair “the means of bringing the best, white and colored people of the state together but it was the means of

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<sup>104</sup>*Macon News*, November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1909.

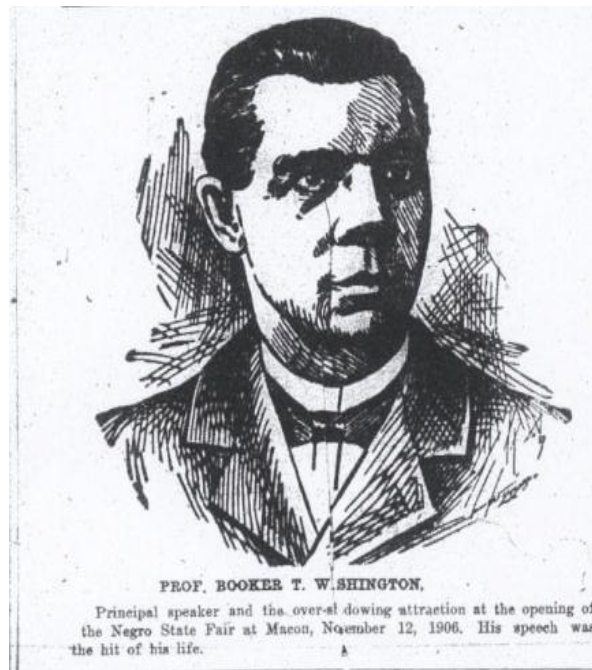
<sup>105</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1906. Booker T. Washington appeared at Georgia’s black fair in 1906 and 1909 and his wife made a speech at the 1907 fair.

<sup>106</sup>*Atlanta Constitution*, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1906.



increasing good feeling between the races.”<sup>107</sup> Washington’s influence subsequently helped to promote the fair as a model of good race relations and similarly confirmed the success of accommodationism as a tool for alleviating racial tensions.

Washington’s appearance and the fair itself received both local and national attention and was reported on by white northern journalist Ray Stannard Baker, who described his experience at Georgia’s first black fair in his article “Following the Color Line”, which was first published in the *American Magazine*.



2. A picture of Washington following his appearance at the 1906 fair.<sup>108</sup>

Baker described how, despite the fact that “racial relationships, owing to the recent riot at Atlanta, were acute”, the fair was well attended. Baker testified that the sentiment of the fair’s motto, “We are rising”, was borne out by the capacity of “Negro farmers to get

<sup>107</sup> Booker T. Washington to William Jennings Bryan, July 12<sup>th</sup>, 1907 in Haynes, *Black Boy of Atlanta*, 86.

<sup>108</sup> *Atlanta Independent*, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

ahead individually” and “organis[e] for self-advancement”.<sup>109</sup> Baker’s article implies that the fair had achieved the objectives of both black and white citizens by promoting good race relations and advertising Macon as a peaceable city, despite larger racial tensions. It also stressed the industrial, agricultural and vocational ambitions of Georgia’s black community and their progress within this field.

The success of the fair was further demonstrated by Baker, who estimated that the “attendance at the fair in Macon was between 25,000 and 30,000” people and that the crowd was comprised of both African Americans and white visitors.<sup>110</sup> The black organisers sought to imply that the African American crowd who attended the fair were composed of an aspiring middle class, differentiating them from a lower class. This implication was created through events at the fair such as Education Day that connected black attendees with an accommodationist sense of racial uplift. The fair infused events with a sense of progress by connecting them with black industry, black education and middle-class business professions. Special days such as Women’s Day and Doctors’ Conference Day further testified to an encouragement of black uplift.<sup>111</sup> Exhibits of vocational and industrial training were seen, such as that of the Ballard Normal School which had a “splendid display of manual training, consisting of some of the most useful pieces of furniture in wood.....basketwork, dressmaking, commodities of the kitchen.”<sup>112</sup> Farming produce, such as fruit, cotton and hay was displayed throughout the event and Wright suggested a competition between schools to see which could produce the highest

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<sup>109</sup> Ray Stannard Baker, *Following the Color Line: An Account of Negro Citizenship in the American Democracy* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1908), 93.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>111</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1906.

<sup>112</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

number of bushels of corn to the acre.<sup>113</sup> The inclusion of Farmers' Day and black farmers within fair narratives of racial uplift again demonstrates how the aspiring black class ranged across myriad occupations rather than solely the business or middle class.<sup>114</sup>

The presence of sideshows and rides, however, meant it was also likely that many attendees also visited purely for fun, enjoying a much-needed break from work. Displays of uplift automatically included African American visitors within this black aspiring middle-class stratum, whether they had proven economic wealth or professional status or not. This inclusion helped project an image of mass community support for Washington's accommodationist methods and a general desire for black uplift, regardless of individual attitudes.

The influence of the white community was pervasive within the fair and accommodationist dialogues helped secure this support. Figures regarding white attendance, however, are unreliable as newspapers, the primary source of information, did not distinguish the number of whites from the fair's overall attendance figures. Newspaper reports stressed that white Georgians who attended the fair applauded displays of black racial uplift, which suggests that they would not have felt in any immediate economic competition with aspiring middle-class African Americans. White visitors were obviously secure enough within their own economic and social position to be impressed by images of black uplift and, by extension, work and trade alongside fellow African American farmers. In *Following the Color Line*, Baker stated that at

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<sup>113</sup> Haynes, *Black Boy of Atlanta*, 78.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid; *Macon Telegraph*, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

Macon's 1906 black state fair "the better class of Negro farmers, indeed, have shown not only a capacity for getting ahead individually, but for organising for self-advancement, and even for working with corresponding associations of white farmers".<sup>115</sup> As there were no reports of any violence, it adds to the likelihood that white visitors would not have viewed the black middle class as a threat to their own economic status, suggesting that white visitors were of a similar class to many white elites who supported the strategy of accommodationism.

As the ten-day white fair preceded the black fair, it would have been more likely that less affluent or lower-class whites would have used their disposable income in order to attend the white fair, thereby limiting the number who would have been able to afford or have the desire to attend the black fair. The black fair, however, might have also provided a cheaper option for poorer whites. In 1906, admission to the white state fair was priced at 50 cents and admission to the black fair was around or below 25 cents.<sup>116</sup> It is unlikely, however, considering the resentment of lower-class whites towards blacks within employment, that they would have gone solely to view displays of black racial uplift and industrial education, instead choosing to attend the event because of the midway and cheaper admission prices.

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<sup>115</sup> Baker, *Following the Color Line*, 93.

<sup>116</sup> Macon Fair Association, *Premium List for 1906 Centennial Fair* (Macon, Georgia; Press of the J. W. Burke Co., 1906), 21, Private records of the Macon Exchange Club and Georgia State Fair Association; There are no records available for exact price of admission to the 1906 black fair. Considering that the price of admission was only 25 cents in 1916, it is likely that the price was the same if not lower. *Macon News*, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1916.

Before the doors had even closed on the 1906 black fair, the event had been widely reported on and praised by white and black publications throughout Georgia, including the *Augusta Chronicle*, *Atlanta Constitution*, *Atlanta Independent* and even, nationally, in Baltimore's *Sun*.<sup>117</sup> Following the fair, Atlanta University Alumni publication *The Scroll* likewise informed its readers that "success [was] a habit with R.R. Wright".<sup>118</sup> The fair's success can also be measured in terms of the degree of public space, black exhibitive space and recreational agency it allowed the black community that, in Georgia's turbulent environment, should not be underestimated.

This is especially pertinent to the 1906 parade where the amassing of black citizens would have evoked fearful memories for many whites of the race riot that had recently taken place in Atlanta in September. In contrast, the black state fair parade was an ordered body of black men and women, a spectacle which stood in stark contrast to the perceived lawlessness and the destruction rumoured to be caused by the black mob in Atlanta only one month earlier. By titling it as a "grand industrial parade", the state fair parade again contrasted with the riot's destruction and instead positively connected black participants to Georgia's economic endeavours.<sup>119</sup> Washington participated in the parade and was escorted by fourteen other members of the black community, of whom four were doctors, again conveying black middle class involvement in the fair. The number of escorts, likewise, translated Washington's importance, and the strategy of accommodationism within the fair's proceedings. The start of the black state fair parades in 1906, however, was significant as it was the first year that African Americans in

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<sup>117</sup>*Augusta Chronicle*, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1906; *Atlanta Constitution*, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1906; *Atlanta Independent*, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1906; *Baltimore Sun*, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>118</sup> Patton, "Major Richard Robert Wright, Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia, 1880-1920", 515.

<sup>119</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

Georgia had paraded without the protection of black militias, which had been disbanded the year before by the state legislature.<sup>120</sup> The lack of protection from black military men also meant that black parade participants were more vulnerable to white attack, making support of local white officers more important to the success of public black ceremonies.<sup>121</sup> For black audience members, that the black parade went ahead in Macon without any violence or incident was proof of the mayor's claims that "Colored people throughout the state who may have any apprehension" would be "absolutely safe".<sup>122</sup>

The lack of any racial tension or violence at the fair further demonstrated the success of the event. The *Macon Telegraph* relayed the admiration of whites who attended and who were "impressed with the manner in which everything was carried out".<sup>123</sup> The *Telegraph* also spoke of the "orderly" behaviour of attendees, stressing that "nothing of an unfortunate character happened".<sup>124</sup> This, however, could also be due to greater control and regulation at the fair in the aftermath of the riot. The medium of the fair was also successful in demonstrating the benefits of accommodationism, as it had generated the white sanction needed for the fair to survive in the weeks following the riot and also prevented any violent white retaliation. The crisis in the strategy was, therefore, resolved in the immediate context of the fair, although this does not suggest that the crisis was resolved ubiquitously or ideologically. At the fair, however, the strategy proved itself to be a tool which could be utilised by both the black and white community to improve the tenor of local race relations. All these factors contributed to the success of Macon's first

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<sup>120</sup> Clark, *Defining Moments*, 204.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. 215.

<sup>122</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>123</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

black fair, a success which was further emphasized by the holding of another fair the following year.

### *Conclusion*

A crisis in accommodationism was played out within the fair and, in turn, the fair became a public venue where the crisis could be addressed. Whilst it did not mean that accommodationism would automatically be embraced nationally within the black community, the fair provided a very public exhibit of the benefits of such a strategy. In the aftermath of the Atlanta riot, it was important for blacks to exhibit a sense of progress and education without the fear of violent reprisal.

Black, and to some extent white, class stratifications that emerged constituted one of the most defining aspects of the fair and provided the foundation on which its bi-racial relationship rested. They also provided a way in which the black fair, its organisers and attendees could differentiate themselves from those who had been “involved” in the riot. These class distinctions were made not only by whites, but also by blacks and defined the fair in following years. Existing tensions show that the Atlanta race riot did not create these stratifications, but did, in fact, exacerbate them, forcing these stratifications to take on an urgency and necessity within the public sphere of Georgia’s first black state fair.

## Chapter Two

### **Accommodationism Renewed: White and Black Relations at Georgia's African American Fair, 1906-1919**

The success of Macon's black fair in 1906 meant that the event continued to be held yearly until 1919. Overt segregation still operated within the fairgrounds, as it did within southern society as a whole during this period, but for the black community, the fair became a conduit for racial negotiation with white authorities, employers and patrons, albeit on a limited basis. Aspiring blacks and whites continued to embrace accommodationism, further consolidating it as a way through which to forge a cross-racial relationship. Nonetheless, accommodationism had many contradictory aspects. For whites, its ideology took on nostalgic features that recalled a falsified antebellum harmony between the two races, but for African Americans it was an avenue through which to promote racial advancement. White nostalgia for an idealised past contrasted with the continued dialogue of racial progress and uplift that organisers sought to display within the medium of the fair and effectively placed limitations upon black progress.

White patronage, however, granted the black fair economic assistance from the local business community even if it did simultaneously further the white business community's interests. It also, therefore, created a culture of dependency that obliged black organisers to comply with white investors' agendas. The black fair, however, demonstrated the mutual convenience and self-interest that accommodationism and a bi-racial *rapprochement* held for both middle-class blacks and for whites. This rapport similarly highlighted national concerns that white businessmen and middle-class blacks shared during this period, such as black migration to the North. There was a marked



economic and social agenda in the fair, which pointed to deepening class divisions within the black community. This chapter examines the relationship between blacks and whites that developed within the fair, how this relationship was shaped by accommodationism in the years following 1906, and what the reciprocal benefits and limitations within the relationship turned out to be.

### *Racial Uplift and Accommodation at the Fair*

Tensions within Georgia's local communities demonstrated that there was still an ongoing need to secure peaceful relations between blacks and whites.<sup>1</sup> In the years that followed the first fair, from 1907-1919, Brundage states that 171 lynchings occurred within Georgia.<sup>2</sup> Although Atlanta's race riot was the most publicised and brutal of its kind, in 1902 black minister Henry McNeal Turner had stated that "Men are hung, shot and burnt by bands of murderers who are almost invariably represented as the most influential and respectable citizens in the community".<sup>3</sup> The black community were, therefore, under constant threat and not just from the white lower classes; a sector to which elite whites had themselves apportioned blame following Atlanta's 1906 riot.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993) 159.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Appendix A. 22, 275-79. Four of the persons lynched in Georgia during this period were white.

<sup>3</sup> Henry McNeal Turner, "The Afro-American Future" [1902 ] in Edwin S. Redkey (ed.), *Respect Black: The Writings and Speeches of Henry McNeal Turner* (New York: Arnos Press Inc. and the New York Times, 1971), 189.

<sup>4</sup> For more information and definitions of the black class system, see Chapter One, pp. 43-52.

Continued racial conflict meant that class stratifications still had social relevance and currency for the black middle class, distinguishing them from any lower classes involved in racial conflicts and enabling them to build up a relationship with the white community. White society likewise viewed the black fair as a place within which to diminish the racial antagonism that had contributed towards the 1906 Atlanta race riot. This was shown by the *Macon News*' editorial that asked readers to remember that in "1906 there were fewer arrests of colored people during the fair than at any other similar period during the year, and this too, in a time of trouble in the city and state. Too much cannot be said in praise of the behaviour at that time".<sup>5</sup>

Following the triumph of the 1906 fair, compliments were offered by white and black newspapers throughout Georgia. The response of the *Macon News* typified the praise, stating, "There is no question of the good results of the fair in 1906 and with the experience gained in that venture it is thought the one of 1907 should prove an even better reflex [sic] of conditions".<sup>6</sup> As a result of the black fair's success, the event was expanded and continued in subsequent years. An extensive state-wide advertising campaign conducted by the fair's organisers resulted in increased publicity and attendance as, for example, in 1909, when the trains were "taxed to their capacity" with people eager to visit the fair.<sup>7</sup> In 1912, organisers spent \$3,448.14 employing 90 persons throughout the state and at the fair, who also travelled around "in order that they might arouse and instruct people along the lines which the fair association is striving to

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<sup>5</sup>*Macon News*, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1907.

<sup>6</sup>*Macon News*, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1907.

<sup>7</sup>*Macon News*, November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1909.

emphasize". The *Tribune* highlighted \$715.46 spent by the fair's organisers on advertising paper and \$501.21 on newspaper advertising.<sup>8</sup>

Figures for 1909 demonstrate that the black fair was well attended, with an estimate for one day of between five and six thousand people.<sup>9</sup> In 1910, 27,481 African Americans resided in Bibb County, comprising roughly 2.3 per cent of Georgia's total African American population.<sup>10</sup> In 1907, Richard Wright, the organiser of the black fair, had expected between 60,000 and 75,000 to attend the fair. If, for example, the 1909 fair had averaged 6,000 attendees a day, it would have attracted around 60,000 visitors.<sup>11</sup> If that was the case, even taking into account possible white visitors, it would have meant that 5.3 per cent of Georgia's black citizens attended the fair. Bibb County was home to only 2.3 per cent of Georgia's African American residents, which indicates that over half of the black visitors would have come from neighbouring counties. Even after the fair had been running for six years, it was estimated that 40,000 people passed through the gates during the ten days of the 1912 fair.<sup>12</sup> This was a marked increase in attendance from 1906 when Baker estimated that between 25,000 and 30,000 people attended.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>*Savannah Tribune*, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1912.

<sup>9</sup>*Macon News*, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1909.

<sup>10</sup>Thirteenth Census of the United States taken in the year 1910 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), 529. The total population of Georgia's black population was 1,176,897.

<sup>11</sup>*Macon News*, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1907.

<sup>12</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1912.

<sup>13</sup> Ray Stannard Baker, *Following the Color Line: An Account of Negro Citizenship in the American Democracy* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1908), 92.

Attendance figures had increased since 1906 demonstrating the success of the event. Further signs of success were seen by the establishment of other black fairs in Georgia, which mimicked the format. The first such fair appeared in Augusta (1908) followed by fairs in Albany (1914) and Savannah (1916). Comparisons were drawn between Macon's black fair and the larger World's Fair. For example, in 1911, the *Macon Telegraph* declared, "A larger number of exhibits will be seen at the fair this year than have ever been displayed, not excepting the negro exhibits at the Cotton States Exposition in Atlanta several years ago, or at the Jamestown Exposition in Norfolk".<sup>14</sup>

Black involvement with fairs formed part of the black middle-class community-building activities, which sought to emphasise "self-help and racial solidarity, [and] exhorted the masses to inculcate assimilationist values of self-improvement, piety, thrift, industry and hard work".<sup>15</sup> Fairs became a canvas on which the products of black middle-class achievement could be promoted through public display. The *Savannah Tribune* agreed that Macon's black fair "will be an ocular demonstration of Negro development and progress along all lines".<sup>16</sup> Booker T. Washington, likewise, stated that the fair was "an object lesson in the center of Georgia and the heart of the South to demonstrate to the world that the Negro is making progress".<sup>17</sup>

Black social and economic distinctions were frequently employed in the context of the fair by both white and African American speakers in order to stress that the fair was

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<sup>14</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>15</sup> Fon Louise Gordon, *Class and Caste: The Black Experience in Arkansas 1880-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 5.

<sup>16</sup>*Savannah Tribune*, March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>17</sup>*Savannah Tribune*, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

evidence of black middle-class progress. Dr John E. White, a white pastor who had previously commented on race relations in Macon following the 1906 riot, spoke at the black fair in 1911, advising the black fair's audience that, in order to gain respect in the South, black citizens must build up character.<sup>18</sup> Fellow speaker, Dr P. James Bryant, pastor of the Negro Baptist Church, employed a harsher rhetoric. Bryant derogatorily described lower classes of African Americans as being worse than rabbits: "they are neither good for stew, bake or fry. To this class belong the dude, gambler, the rounder and the vagrant, and if he works at all it is unreliable, irregular and unsatisfactory".<sup>19</sup> Bryant's words echoed the economic class distinctions that Washington had employed at the opening of the black fair five years earlier, demonstrating the continued use of such diatribes within the aspiring middle-class black community. The forcefulness of Bryant's words again highlight how important these distinctions were to the black community as aspiring black citizens not only used such stratifications to differentiate themselves, in order to build a relationship with the white community, but also to provide a psychological and practical means of coping with repressive racial conditions. It also demonstrates how black church leaders instrumentalised an ostensibly secular event, imbuing it with a sense of moral purpose.

Promotional appeals to black farmers, and requests for white employers' permission for their domestic workers to attend, demonstrate that organisers expected those who frequented the fair to work within agricultural and domestic spheres.<sup>20</sup> A high percentage of those who attended would have fallen into these brackets. Sociologist

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<sup>18</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> See Chapter Four for a discussion of the occupations of those who attended the fair, pp.201-203.

Stephen Steinberg states that, by 1930, 90 per cent of African American women in employment worked in agriculture and domestic or personal service, whereas the corresponding percentage for employed African American males stood at 54 per cent, although nearly all of the remaining 46 per cent were unskilled workers.<sup>21</sup> While John Dittmer similarly stresses that, within Georgia, nearly a third of the black labour force worked in domestic and personal service (the highest area of employment next to agriculture) he also notes the rise of skilled tradesmen within the black community.<sup>22</sup> The presence of black educators, businessmen and skilled workers, however, shows that, while demographically smaller, more skilled occupational groups were also involved with the fair. Margaret James Murray (the wife of Booker T. Washington) was of only a few prominent black women mentioned in relation to the black fair. Lucy Craft Laney was also mentioned for her role overseeing the Women's Day programme at Macon's fair in 1906.<sup>23</sup> Like their male counterparts, these women worked as educators, not in the domestic occupations that typified black female occupations in the South. Murray had been the female principal of the Tuskegee Institute since 1889, whilst Laney opened her own school in Augusta, Georgia, in 1883 and is considered to be Georgia's most famous female African American educator.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America* (New York: Athenaeum, 1981), 206-207.

<sup>22</sup> John Dittmer, *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era 1900-1920* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1980), 27.

<sup>23</sup> Charles J. Elmore, *Richard R. Wright, Sr., at GSIC, 1891-1921: A Protean Force for the Social Uplift and Higher Education of Black Americans* (Savannah, Georgia: Privately Printed, 1996), 41.

<sup>24</sup> "Lucy Craft Laney 1854- 1933", The New Georgia Encyclopedia, <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-820> (accessed 12.07.11).

The venture of the black fair was widely supported by Georgia's African Americans, as seen by economic contributions that organisers received from across the state. The *Tribune* stated that the "fair will have the strong financial backing of a capital stock fixed at \$10,000, which is to be raised from Negroes around the state. The shares are to be valued at \$1.00 each, five thousand dollars of this amount will be provided for premiums".<sup>25</sup> Statistics released in 1907 show that the association raised more than this amount, generating a total of \$10,862.08.<sup>26</sup> Five years later, Wright testified before a congressional committee that he had raised \$10,000 towards the venture of the "Negro State Fair", attesting to the continued desire of the black community to hold the event.<sup>27</sup> Individual contributions towards the black fair were invaluable and continued to be so throughout the years the fair was held. The limited economic means of many of the black participants made the contributions even more significant.<sup>28</sup>

"Press Day" was often held at the fairgrounds, encouraging the black press to take an interest and report on the venture.<sup>29</sup> From 1906-1918, Macon had numerous black newspapers such as the *Macon Dispatch*, *Georgia Broadaxe*, *Wise Men's Herald*,

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<sup>25</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>26</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1907.

<sup>27</sup> Donald L. Grant, *The Way It Was in the South: The Black Experience in Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 247.

<sup>28</sup> Data is only available comparing the value of the dollar in 1906 to that in 2009. The relative worth of the dollar would have been approximately \$24.60. Lawrence H. Officer and Samuel H. Williamson, *Measuringworth*, <http://www.measuringworth.com/index.html> (accessed 23.11.10).

<sup>29</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1909.

*Southern Standard* and *Baptist Standard*.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, no copies have survived, testifying to the problematic nature regarding the archiving and storage of black publications and sources during this period. Other black state publications, such as the *Atlanta Independent* and the *Savannah Tribune*, reported favourably on the venture of the black state fair, providing a snapshot of southern black opinion. The *Atlanta Independent* was established in 1904 and edited by Benjamin J. Davis. It was also connected to Atlanta's Grand Order of Odd Fellows, a black group which provided insurance for many African Americans.<sup>31</sup> The *Independent* stated that the fair was "one of the most potential factors for the economic and industrial uplift of the colored people in the South".<sup>32</sup> Likewise, the *Tribune* called the fair "the greatest organisation of its kind in the country amongst colored people".<sup>33</sup> The venture of the fair does not appear to have been reported in more national publications, such as *Alexander's Magazine* and the *Voice*. Georgia's black fair, therefore, shared a similar political agenda and interpretation of black uplift to those of many local black publications during this period. Both showed that it was a widely held belief amongst African Americans that industrial training created opportunities to further black political and social power during this period.

Examples of black middle-class uplift and progress were also evidenced through the varied days and conferences held at the fair in subsequent years. Links between black industry, education and efforts at racial uplift, as forged within the national strategy of

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<sup>30</sup> Macon newspapers edited and published by African Americans in Macon, information compiled from Macon City Directories through 1950 by Peer E. Ravnan, Archivist at the Middle Georgia Library, 1987.

<sup>31</sup> *The Freeman*, July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1913.

<sup>32</sup> *Atlanta Independent*, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1910.

<sup>33</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1911.



accommodationism, were presented to southern black communities on a more localised level. Special days regularly included: Educational Day, Civic Society Day, Labor Day [sic], Women's Day and Farmers' Day. Together, they helped stress aspects of black industry, agriculture and education within the fair, perpetuating an accommodationist interpretation of uplift. As the *Atlanta Independent* declared, "both races are commended to the Washington idea of education...and there is no better place to stimulate inspiration and develop the morality of doing work well than the industrial and economic movement conducted at Macon, GA each November".<sup>34</sup> A speech by Margaret James Murray similarly stressed the importance of industrial education combined with black devotion to duty.<sup>35</sup> The attendance of presidents of educational colleges, such as the Ballard Normal School, which promoted black trade, stressed the intertwining of black trades and education. Likewise, the appearance of prominent African American figures such as the registrar of the U.S Treasury, J. C. Napier, in 1911, showed how the organisers deliberately courted speakers who embodied middle-class uplift for the fair's oratory programme.<sup>36</sup>

Women's Day at the fair reveals a gendered interpretation of racial uplift and personal responsibility. The *Atlanta Independent* stressed the "work of our good women was excellent and would do credit to any race of women".<sup>37</sup> Uplift for both men and women meant "production, respectability, and empowerment vis-à-vis one's family and [the]

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<sup>34</sup>*Atlanta Independent*, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1910.

<sup>35</sup>*Macon News*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1907.

<sup>36</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>37</sup>*Atlanta Independent*, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1910.

larger community”, but each had their own specifically gendered role to play.<sup>38</sup> Black women, therefore, played an equally critical part in perpetuating and embodying reformist discourse.<sup>39</sup> Women were deemed to be responsible for the domestic sphere and family health, essentially solidifying the black family unit and, by association, the black race.<sup>40</sup> Exhibits at the fair reflected this gendered sense of women’s skills and responsibility and every year the fair had a Women’s Department and dedicated Women’s Day. In 1907, “[h]ome industry [was] encouraged” with “quilting, sewing, preserving and other work of the home seen at the fair”.<sup>41</sup> On Women’s Day, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1914, “[s]everal hundred Negro women [displayed] proofs of their skill in needlework and domestic science”.<sup>42</sup> Other exhibits in the Women’s Department were said to be “very creditable indeed. There are exhibits of cakes, pies, breads, preserves, embroidery, lace work, fancy work and knitting and crochet work”.<sup>43</sup> Three days later, on “Baby Day”, mothers were admitted free of charge, indicating that women’s role within the fair very much reflected their position within the uplift movement at large as that of homemaker and mother, a role that emulated white standards of middle class respectability.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Martin Summers, *Manliness and Its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and its Transformation of Masculinity 1900-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 112.

<sup>39</sup> Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 12.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>41</sup> *Macon News*, October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1907.

<sup>42</sup> *Macon News*, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1914.

<sup>43</sup> *Macon News*, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1914.

<sup>44</sup> *Macon News*, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1914.

During these days, competition was encouraged between the women, with prizes offered for the winners of categories which ranged from canned peaches; visiting dresses; table covers; dresser scarves; the daintiest child's dress; baby caps; painting and drawing and bead work.<sup>45</sup> The *Savannah Tribute* spurred on this sense of competition, stating, "Let the women of the state vie with each other in pastry, preserves and plain and fancy needlework".<sup>46</sup> Reports demonstrate that this sense of competition was encouraged more between black women, than within any other department or sector of the black fair. Competition was thus used to encourage the best work from female participants, which, in turn, reflected the superiority and extent of black progress. Middle-class respectability took on specifically gendered terms and, for women, domestic decorum challenged racist assumptions about black women's inability as mothers. Competitions elevating the work of black women and mothers contradicted cultural images of black women being slovenly, unclean and irresponsible. Such domestic competitions, therefore, mimicked models of white femininity in order to prove black women's capability and morality in the public sphere.<sup>47</sup>

Such competitions also drew attention to black women's labour within white homes and helped to show white people the value of supporting black uplift as it encouraged black domestic workers within the white homestead. This was consistent with the dialogues, which had emerged at the 1906 fair as it again demonstrated how whites supported black initiatives when they saw it as being advantageous to their own needs. The 1911 cooking competition was overseen by three prominent white women and

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<sup>45</sup>*Macon News*, November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1914.

<sup>46</sup>*Savannah Tribune*, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>47</sup>Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*. Mitchell discusses issues of reproduction, home life and class at length throughout Chapters Three, Four and Five.

“cooks were judged on cleanliness, economy, and taste”.<sup>48</sup> The *Telegraph* argued that cooking competitions helped to “add dignity to domestic science and to promote honorable and wholesome rivalry among those who are engaged as cooks in the best families of the state”.<sup>49</sup> The newspaper, likewise, applauded the “educational value of the model kitchen and cooking contest “with a view to reviving and maintaining interest in this important line of negro woman’s work in the south”.<sup>50</sup>

These gendered exhibitions and competitions did not differ from those held at the white state fair’s Women’s Department, but the meaning and implications behind them did since such competitions at black fairs showed that women’s progress was directly linked to the uplift of the race at large. Richard Wright’s wife, Lydia Elizabeth Howard Wright, had previously been president of a Women’s Department at the 1903 Farmers’ Conference, which encouraged “better homes, greater care in eating habits and provided information on improving the Negro’s health”.<sup>51</sup> In 1906, President Wright conducted a women’s meeting in which household economics was led by an expert in that field.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, the Women’s Department at the fair showed “[t]he possibilities of the race with the needle and finger, the machine and scissors, the brush and paint”. Housekeeping and domestic science promised even “greater possibilities if the exhibits and show in the Women’s Department of the fair is any indication of our progress or

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<sup>48</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>49</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1913.

<sup>50</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>51</sup> June O. Patton, “Major Richard Robert Wright, Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia, 1880-1920” (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1980), 495.

<sup>52</sup> Elizabeth Ross Haynes, *The Black Boy of Atlanta* [1952] (New York: G. K. Hall, 1997), 371.

possibilities”.<sup>53</sup> Specifically, the *Macon News* stressed it was the gendered displays of “domestic, home-making activities that are the basis of good citizenship and patriotism”.<sup>54</sup> Such exhibits allowed black women to be considered on a par with their white state fair counterparts. For example, in 1916, the *Macon Telegraph* reported how black women at the fair claimed “that the displays are fully as good as those had by the white women at the Georgia state fair” and the newspaper agreed that they had “good ground for their assertion”.<sup>55</sup>

Between 1893 and 1939, there were as many as seven women’s departments erected at world and national fairs held in U.S. cities.<sup>56</sup> Despite the fact these departments were specifically focused on white women they shared similarities to Georgia’s black fair’s women’s days and exhibits. Although they were on a larger scale they also focused on gendered activities, such as the importance of home building, revealing a political slant to women’s work. Special meetings conducted at the 1897 Tennessee Centennial Women’s Building aired intellectual, cultural, economic, and political topics that revolved around the general theme of “woman’s mission and woman’s work”.<sup>57</sup> During these days, speaker Angie Perkins emphasised the work of women’s clubs in widening a woman’s intellectual outlook and opportunities beyond her own “gateposts”,

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<sup>53</sup> *Atlanta Independent*, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1907.

<sup>54</sup> *Macon News*, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1909.

<sup>55</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1916.

<sup>56</sup> Mary Pepchinski, “Women’s Building at European and American World Fairs, 1893-1939” in T. J. Boisseau and Abigail M. Markwyn (eds.), *Gendering the Fair: Histories of Women and Gender at World’s Fair* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 188.

<sup>57</sup> Perry, “Memorialising the 1897 Tennessee Centennial Women’s Building” in Boisseau and Markwyn (eds.), *Gendering the Fair*, 157-58.

encouraging them to consider more than “the compounding of a cake and... the fit of a gown”.<sup>58</sup>

Such dialogues helped connect the women at the World Fair to the suffrage movement, which agitated for white women’s political rights. African American women were denied the opportunity to participate in such days and as “far as can be surmised from the newspaper reports of the Special Days, not one African American woman appeared on the Woman’s Building programs”.<sup>59</sup> Events such as the black state fair, therefore, provided an alternative platform that African American women could use in order to further their own political concerns. Women’s days at Georgia’s black fair thus emulated the format of women’s departments and buildings at the larger white dominated World Fairs. They emphasised women’s duty to the home, on the one hand, while, voicing political and national concerns which affected black racial uplift during this period on the other. The intertwining of such concerns demonstrated that black women were simultaneously conservative in terms of gender, in order to be progressive with regards to race.

Women’s Days and Congresses at Georgia’s black fair helped to highlight the political role that women played in the movement for black uplift. As bearers of the next generation of their race, they had become a potent political force. Their position was further consolidated by the ideology that believed “a nation can rise in the scale no higher than its womanhood”, making them ideal candidates to spearhead reformist

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 159.

campaigns and lead the black race into the twentieth century.<sup>60</sup> During the fair, black women did, in fact, participate in all-day conferences to discuss reformist issues – in 1907, for example, many “prominent Negro Women [were] scheduled for addresses”. After a welcome speech, the women responded to questions for discussion, one of which was “What can the Colored Women do Specially for the Elevation of Her [sic] Own Sex?”<sup>61</sup> Women attended from cities across Georgia ranging from Milledgeville, Americus, Bouie, Augusta and Washington. The highlight of the 1907 Women’s Congress was the appearance of Margaret James Murray. Surviving records of the discussions demonstrate how Murray used the occasion to urge the importance of sobriety and economy to help raise the standard of black integrity.<sup>62</sup> Records of similar Women’s Days, departments and speeches were likewise evidenced in 1909, 1913 and 1914.<sup>63</sup>

In 1907, Murray also discussed “Race Betterment”, which was a term used by the eugenic movement of the time.<sup>64</sup> Georgia’s black fair created an arena through which to promote eugenic thought. Again, women and mothers played a vital role in these theories as reproduction was a significant issue for both African Americans and whites during the early twentieth century. Black propagation linked into wider fears regarding “race suicide”, a theory, which asserted that a “natural” social order was created by a

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<sup>60</sup> Summers, *Manliness and its Discontents*, 114

<sup>61</sup> *Macon News*, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1907.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Macon News*, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1909; November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1913; November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1914.

<sup>64</sup> *Macon News*, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1907.

race's ability to evolve into a civilized culture.<sup>65</sup> In 1896, Frederick L. Hoffman asserted in *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro* that a higher number of African American deaths than births was partly responsible for making them lose the "struggle for race supremacy".<sup>66</sup>

Subsequently, Michele Mitchell has argued that 1890 to 1930 was an era of crisis for those concerned with the quality and quantity of African American people.<sup>67</sup> Such national concerns that the African American race was in danger of extinction were addressed through days devoted to babies and older generations. Images of an increased black population helped demonstrate the progress of the black community. Baby shows were a celebration of the survival and perpetuation of the African American community following slavery. The 1913 baby show featured up to three hundred babies, with cash prizes offered for twins and triplets, which symbolised the epitome of black fecundity.<sup>68</sup> The prizes were also substantial, with the 1913 show offering \$10,000 for twins, in order to generate black interest and entry in the competition.<sup>69</sup> In 1914, the fair juxtaposed past and present tableaux of the black race by holding a baby show on Monday, into which 120 babies were entered, and an Ex-Slave Day on Tuesday.<sup>70</sup> Michele Mitchell views the state fair baby shows as part of a wider national dialogue in which "individuals, media and public forums forged a clear link between group vitality,

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<sup>65</sup> Laura Lovett, *Conceiving the Future, Pronatalism, Reproduction in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 89.

<sup>66</sup> Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*, 82.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>68</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1913.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> *Macon News*, November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1914.



racial reproduction, and sex; all of which were instrumental in vivifying that particular link for the Afro-American public”.<sup>71</sup> These links were deepened when, in 1916, there was an “Old Folks’ Day”.<sup>72</sup> The juxtaposition of “Old Folks’ Days” and Baby Shows created a sense of generational continuity and demonstrated the physical survival of the black race in the years following slavery. By demonstrating the progress of the African American community beyond slavery and its thriving future, events at the black state fair defied social theories of race suicide.

Women’s clubs were also involved with the fair and, in 1907, Richard Wright, along with the stockholders of the fair, took the opportunity to “thank and commend the noble women who through the Ladies Auxiliary Organization did so much good and faithful work to make the fair a success”.<sup>73</sup> During Women’s Day at the 1914 fair, there was a meeting of the Women’s Federation whose “program [was] to be carried out by state’s leading negro women”.<sup>74</sup> In 1916, there were also women’s club exercises.<sup>75</sup> Black women’s clubs were an important vehicle for promoting racial reform; they had emerged in the late 1890s and continued to mushroom throughout the country. The clubs provided the chance for women to mobilise and address social needs of the black community, which otherwise remained unmet. Gerda Lerner argues that the “virtual absence of social welfare institutions in many southern communities and the frequent exclusion of Blacks from those that existed, led black women to found orphanages, old

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<sup>71</sup> Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*, 80.

<sup>72</sup> *Macon News*, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1916.

<sup>73</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1907.

<sup>74</sup> *Macon News*, October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1914.

<sup>75</sup> *Macon News*, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1916.

folks' homes and similar institutions".<sup>76</sup> Other work extended to uplifting educational discussions, advice on childcare, home economics, vegetable gardening and sewing, along with missionary, temperance and welfare activities.<sup>77</sup>

Women involved with the fair, such as Margaret James Washington and Lucy Laney, were also involved in club work or establishing schools which quickly became "centers for community organizations, women's activities and a network of supporting institutions".<sup>78</sup> Many prominent black women were involved in club work. Murray, for example, had been president of the Tuskegee Women's club since 1895.<sup>79</sup> The work of black clubwomen thus contributed to the black community at large and their appearance at the fair demonstrates the importance and pervasiveness of their work.<sup>80</sup>

Club work also created the opportunity for racial interaction between white and black women. During Macon's 1916 fair, "many white women prominent in club work [promised] to attend and help the negro women in their work. This [was] also women's day for the negro women and a mass meeting will be held in the Women's Building".<sup>81</sup> Cross-racial contact during the fair was not undertaken on equal terms: white women were there in order to instruct and guide black women, participating in the capacity of teachers rather than as equals. Racial cooperation between black and white club women

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<sup>76</sup> Gerda Lerner, "Early Community Work of Black Club Women", *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (April, 1974), 159.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>81</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1916.

was not uncommon, but there were also reservations regarding racial equality during these interactions. During World War I, such concerns over equality were voiced by the black sector of Atlanta's Young Women's Christian Association who demanded the right to choose their own staff, stating it was a "race question" and the "question is whether or not colored women can in some communities cooperate with white women and at the same time keep their self-respect".<sup>82</sup> Examples of more successful interaction between Atlanta's black and white club women could, however, be seen as early as 1919 when an agreement resulted in several decades of inter-racial cooperation among women in the fight against lynching.<sup>83</sup>

Membership in such clubs followed the general ethos of the fair and mainly involved black women of a middle-class social standing. At times, this produced strong class prejudices and many club women demonstrated a "patronising missionary attitude in dealing with the poor".<sup>84</sup> Lerner points out that this was true of both black and white women's club movements, despite the former being more successful at bridging the class barrier and concerning themselves with issues of importance to poor women.<sup>85</sup> In general, Mitchell agrees that, while reformist dialogue emerged out of specific concerns, "it also reflected increased class stratification and interracial tensions" more widely.<sup>86</sup> Uplift was deemed to be the concern of the black middle class as they already "functioned as arbiters between the white community and the masses and as interpreters

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<sup>82</sup>Lerner, "Early Community Work of Black Club Women", 166-67.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>86</sup> Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*, 12.

of public issues affecting the black community”.<sup>87</sup> Such concerns focused on temperance, sexuality, disease and black neighbourhoods as, for example, seen by the “Atlanta Health Campaign” conducted by the Neighbourhood Union Group in 1914.<sup>88</sup> For many black elites what emerged from these wider campaigns was an “emphasis on self-help, racial solidarity, temperance, thrift, chastity, social purity, patriarchal authority, and the accumulation of wealth”.<sup>89</sup> These virtues were deemed to be individual tools that would help the black middle-class to gain rights, citizenship and accrue economic wealth, whilst also providing a marker that separated them from other blacks who rejected such social concerns.

With their clear links to progress, the yearly parades conducted by the fair’s organisers were also duty bound to depict the respectability of the black community. When marching through the streets of Macon, the participants made every effort to present a respectable and attractive scene. For instance, during Macon’s 1906 State Fair Parade, the floats were “artistically decorated with autumn flowers and leaves” and, during the event, participating hack men were encouraged to brush up their vehicles and use their best horses for participants to ride during the parade.<sup>90</sup> In later years, organisers encouraged such decorative initiatives by offering the prize of a “handsome watch” to the boy with the best decorated wagon and a doll to the best dressed girl riding on a float.<sup>91</sup> These images contrasted with dialogues prevalent in white culture, which

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<sup>87</sup> Gordon, *Class and Caste*, 5.

<sup>88</sup> Dittmer, *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era*, 65.

<sup>89</sup> Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1996), 2.

<sup>90</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>91</sup> *Macon News*, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1916.

portrayed the black race as uncivilized and savage, as seen in books such as Charles Carroll's *The Negro a Beast* (1900).<sup>92</sup> The parades projected a living tableau of an ordered and respectable black community within a predominantly white public space, which helped to counteract negative stereotypes.

The fair continued to be used by African American leaders as an example of progressive race relations, which, in turn, helped African Americans to interact peacefully, and gain privilege, with the white community. Following an appearance at Alabama's 1906 'white' state fair, Washington mused, in a Sunday evening talk at Tuskegee, that those in charge of the Negro department were "overwhelmed with words of congratulation and kindness by members of the white race". Washington further stated, "At each of these fairs an opportunity is given for the two races to come together, to look each other in the face, to see things, we, each, are trying to accomplish." He then added that this had "gone far in establishing better relations between the two races".<sup>93</sup> His speech presented the fairs as an arena in which both blacks and whites could view black progress and use the products of this progress in order to work together towards a harmonious future. This again spoke to the mutual benefits of black uplift and industry, as promised through accommodationism. Furthermore, this racial reconciliation was linked to African American progress; it suggested that the black attendee would have "seen himself as never before" and likened this sense of self-realisation to the "discovery of the North Pole".<sup>94</sup> The *Macon Telegraph* told of how, at the 1910 fair, the

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<sup>92</sup> Charles Carroll, *The Negro a Beast or In the Image of God* (St Louis: American Book and Bible House, 1900) <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/book/lookupid?key=olbp33401> (accessed 05.02.11).

<sup>93</sup> Louis R. Harlan and Raymond W. Smock (eds.), *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, Vol. 9 (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 110.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

white community was “surprised by the splendid aggregations of excellent exhibits in the agricultural, art and animal department”. As a result, “the most prominent whites as well as negroes” congratulated Wright and other fair officials.<sup>95</sup> By highlighting what the African American community was able to achieve within the microcosm of the fair, black leaders presented an example of what racial uplift could attain within a wider arena.

Black leaders and white newspapers both continued to stress the importance of white approval in relation to the venture of the fair. This questioned the extent to which the fair supported white elitist notions of race and class, yet simultaneously pointed to the limited choice the fair organisers had when operating within the confines of white control. Organisers of the fair could not have failed to note the words of the head of Georgia’s Department of Education, Marion Luther Brittain, to the General Assembly of Georgia: “Who knows what the Negro is thinking, saying, in his societies, churches, and various organisations? Do you? Do I? The truth is, our negligence about this injures us as much or more than the negro”.<sup>96</sup> Brittain’s statement revealed how black institutions created anxiety for white authorities, an anxiety which encouraged white involvement in and control of black affairs. This subsequently undermined black independence, equality and agency even within separate social spaces. Repercussions resulting from white anxiety were severe. As Robin Kelley states, “When southern white ruling groups suspected dissident activities among African Americans they tried

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<sup>95</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1910.

<sup>96</sup> M. L. Brittain addressing the General Assembly of the State of Georgia, *The Forty-First Annual Report of the Department of Education to the General Assembly of the State of Georgia for the School Year ending December 31, 1912* (Atlanta, Georgia: Chas P. Byrd printer, 1913), 38.

to monitor and sometimes to shut down black social spaces—usually swiftly and violently”.<sup>97</sup>

Deliberate displays of accommodationism, one of which was “White Folks’ Day”, were enacted within the medium of the black fair in order to allay white anxieties. Once the African American fair was established in Macon, it followed the example of the white State Fair, which had a “Negro Day”, during which black patrons could attend the fair, and similarly demarcated one day as the “special day for the visit of our white friends”.<sup>98</sup> Black organisers also invited white authorities to attend and present, such as on Educational Day which often included speeches from white educators. Tellingly, in 1914, two years after expressing his anxiety regarding the damage white authorities caused themselves by not knowing what went on at black institutions, Brittain appeared at the black fair. Along with other black and white educators he delivered one of the main speeches on “Educational Day”, though unfortunately no records survive of the address.<sup>99</sup> The fair, therefore, presented itself as an opportunity for white authorities to insert themselves into black proceedings under the guise of bi-racial accord.

Because of the Jim Crow system, “White Folks’ Day” did not have the same legal, economic or social authority as “Negro Day” since the designated days at the fair mirrored each group’s position within Georgia’s society at large. For whites, “Negro Day” benevolently granted blacks space within a white-dominated arena. “White Folks’

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<sup>97</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, “We Are Not What We Seem: Rethinking Working-class Opposition in the Jim Crow South” in Raymond A. Mohl and Kenneth W. Goings (eds.), *The New African American Urban History* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publishing Inc, 1996), 192.

<sup>98</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>99</sup> *Macon News*, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1914.

Day” at the black fair created a racial space that was controlled and rested upon white patronage. Another reason black organisers urged whites to attend was so that black workers, often employed by whites, could also attend the fair. Fittingly, in 1907, black organisers explicitly recognised this dependence by making November 2<sup>nd</sup> “Employers’ Day” for which the management of the Central Southern, and other railways, consented to a leave of absence of as many of their employers as they could spare.<sup>100</sup>

“White Folks’ Day” had distinct accommodationist features and newspaper appeals written by black organisers urged “white friends” to attend the fair in order to view, and perhaps monitor, the progress of the black community.<sup>101</sup> In a letter to the white people of Macon, Richard R. Wright stressed how black organisers were anxious for “the white people [to] come to the fairgrounds to see our exhibits”.<sup>102</sup> In declaring white attendance necessary to validate African American progress, black organisers played into the double bind of accommodationism: they outwardly capitulated to the idea of white authority but traded upon this concept in order to further their own interests. The organiser of Macon’s black fair, Wright, stated as much when he addressed the audience of Augusta’s black fair in 1908. Wright stressed that: “It is a fact, my friends, whether you are willing to admit it or not, that we cannot succeed in this Southland except by lief [*sic*] of the good white people who are the dominant class in this section—especially is this true in the rural districts. The friendship, the good will and the cooperation of the whites is absolutely necessary”.<sup>103</sup> The need for this union was articulated in the strategy of accommodation and publicly enacted through the medium

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<sup>100</sup> *Macon News*, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1907.

<sup>101</sup> *Macon News*, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1913.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Augusta Chronicle*, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1908.



of the fair. The emphasis on necessity and the stressed dominance of the white class indicates that few forms of independence were available to black communities, especially, as Wright pointed out, in more rural areas.

Segregation and Jim Crow laws still operated within the fair although, as these laws were implicit in southern society, they would have not been mentioned frequently within newspaper reports of the fair. For example, at Augusta's 1908 fair, the stalls for the football game were segregated for white and black patrons.<sup>104</sup> Racially segregated spheres were similarly enforced between the fair organisers and visiting guest speakers. Racial taboos regarding the sharing of food and dinner tables also extended to the black fair. During a cooking competition, held at Macon's 1911 black fair, participants had the "privilege" of preparing dinner for Mayor John T. Moore and his friends, but despite being a guest speaker at the fair, he did not eat with the black organisers who were served dinner on a different night.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, the very nature of race relations in the segregated South meant that white guests would not even have entertained the prospect of breaking such lines. The white sanction that the black fair needed to continue, therefore, meant that the event rested upon clearly defined white and black roles. The sharing of space between whites and blacks at Macon's black fair was, however, problematic, as demonstrated by the segregating of the midway in 1906. During the world fairs held throughout the early twentieth century, the issue of inter-racial contact was not such a contentious issue as blacks were invited into a white space and forced to abide by white rules. Though not referring directly to rides on the midway, Rydell argues that, during the Cotton States and International Exposition in 1895, public

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<sup>104</sup>*Augusta Chronicle*, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1908.

<sup>105</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1994.

buildings were not segregated. Black patrons, however, were only allowed in at the discretion of the concession operators and were often confronted by signs, which read “For Whites Only” and “No Niggers or Dogs Allowed”.<sup>106</sup> Equally, the gatemen were often reported to have been churlish to black visitors, who were also expected to pay double fare if they wanted a trip on the surface cars.<sup>107</sup> African Americans were, therefore, invited into a recreational space, which enforced white superiority through ritual black humiliation.

Although Georgia’s white state fair was segregated, it did include days to which the black community was invited.<sup>108</sup> Such days meant that black patrons were subject to segregated seating, entrances and facilities. The fair hosted “Negro Days” which African Americans were invited to attend and even address audiences. A poster advertising “Negro Day” at the Georgia State Fair on October 16th, 1899, held in Atlanta, proclaimed “Negro Day” to be the “Greatest Day in the History of The Negro in Georgia”. Peyton Austin Allen, along with Richard R. Wright, Booker T. Washington, Rev. Leigh B. Maxwell and Rev. Henry H. Proctor gave speeches at the event.<sup>109</sup> Similarly, in 1908, the *Macon Telegraph* stated there was to be a “Negro Day” during which “negroes will attend in large numbers [and] the usual white patronage is

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<sup>106</sup> Robert Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Exhibitions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 85.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Gregory J. Renoff, *The Big Tent: The Travelling Circus in Georgia, 1820-1930* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 87.

<sup>109</sup> Details of Peyton Austin Allen’s inventory found at Auburn Avenue Library Inventory, Atlanta Fulton Library System, Atlanta Georgia [http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/aafa/html/aafa\\_aarl94-006.html](http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/aafa/html/aafa_aarl94-006.html) (accessed 01.02.07).

expected to continue”.<sup>110</sup> Unlike other days at the fair devoted to various social groups and factions, “Negro Day” was not there to celebrate Georgia’s African American community. Instead, the organisers restricted and dictated the conditions under which the black community was allowed to attend the fair and congregate in public, thus immediately designating the fair as a white recreational event. Access to the fair was completely controlled by white organisers. In 1911, a request was made by the president of the “colored” Macon Fair Association that the last two days of “our State Fair be given over to the colored people”. The use of the word, “our” naturalised the notion of the fair belonging to white citizens. The motion was promptly denied.<sup>111</sup> This contrasted with the claims of Judge W. R. Hammond who stated, “The negro is not excluded from attendance upon State fairs--in Georgia--where I live--but he does not participate in them”.<sup>112</sup> Benny Scott, a black railroad engineer residing in Macon, stated nineteen years later, in 1930, that Georgia’s white fair was still firmly segregated and the only blacks at the fair were maids escorting the children of their employers.<sup>113</sup>

Macon’s black fair was essentially an inversion of the white-dominated recreation seen at state and world’s fairs, although it did not grant blacks complete agency. The black

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<sup>110</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1908.

<sup>111</sup> “Minutes of the Georgia State Fair Association 1909-1911”, March 24<sup>th</sup> 1911, Georgia State Fair Association Collection, Box 11, Folder, 90. Washington Memorial Library, Macon, Georgia.

<sup>112</sup> General Deficiency Bill, Hearings conducted by the subcommittee Messrs J. J. Fitzgerald (chairman), Charles L. Bartlett, Thomas U. Sisson, Joseph G. Cannon, and Frederick H. Gillett of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives in charge of deficiencies for the fiscal year 1912 and prior years. Statement of Judge W. R. Hammond, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1912. Courtesy of Renna Tuten at the University of Georgia, Athens.

<sup>113</sup> “Macon’s Black Heritage”, *Macon Telegraph*, February 18<sup>th</sup>, 1979.

fair was a temporal, black, recreational space into which whites had chosen to enter; consequently, whites did not have the power, as at the World Fairs, to prevent black patrons from entering sections of the fair. Such details provide a reminder that Jim Crow regulations predominantly operated in what were considered to be white spaces, whether public, domestic or industrial. The fair demonstrated how Jim Crow regulations were complicated when they were applied to a public space, which was visually dominated and, to an extent, controlled by blacks. Despite white involvement, the fair was essentially a black space. Therefore, segregation almost worked in reverse, keeping whites out. The black fair complicated Jim Crow legislation, which designated that blacks and whites should have separate facilities, with blacks being forced to occupy inferior spaces. The black fair was not an inferior space as it shared the same physical location and rides as the white state fair. White patrons, likewise, chose to insert themselves into the black fair, marking it as a space, which was worthy of patronage. Given that reports show that many white concession and midway operators had chosen to stay on following the white fair to continue business at the black fair, there would have been little point erecting signs similar to those seen at the World Fair which banned black patrons from the rides. As Macon's white community supported the black fair, it meant that white midway operators would not have had any problems trading at the black, as well as the white, state fair. In fact, their extended stay doubled operators' revenue for the period they were in Macon which, as discussed later, demonstrated how such racial interaction benefited whites and blacks economically.

There is evidence that the midway was not always segregated, as demonstrated by the violent confrontation between Fews, Adam and Solomon at Georgia's fair in 1906.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> The newspaper coverage of the incident is discussed in Chapter One, pp.36-39.

Questions concerning integrated space at the black fair would have been particularly pertinent around the midway as rides, such as the Ferris wheel, and performances would have required seating. Since segregated seating extended across every point of social contact between blacks and whites in the South during this era, it is interesting to question how white citizens would have negotiated the midway rides and midway shows where black citizens were, or had been, sitting. Additionally, black stalls and games meant that participating black and white visitors could have won similar merchandise and consumer goods.

As Wright had stated in his letter, whites were invited specifically to view images of black progress and uplift.<sup>115</sup> Some white visitors would have been eager to uphold the racial boundaries and propriety, which formed the core of this paternalistic relationship. It is, therefore, questionable if the frivolity of the midway would have been considered suitable for white patrons. Despite the racial conventions, which dictated adult behaviour, it is also debatable whether white children visiting the fair would have experienced the same social restrictions about interacting and playing with black children. Jennifer Ritterhouse has traced the experiences of children growing up in the Jim Crow South, following them into “interracial spaces such as yards, fields, and kitchens where they played and fought and tried on racial concepts for size”.<sup>116</sup> Ritterhouse demonstrates that while children were taught their racial position, Jim Crow boundaries were more fluid for them than they were for adults. The white presence at the black fair, therefore, contained ambiguities within sectors of the fairground. The

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<sup>115</sup> *Macon News*, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1913.

<sup>116</sup> Jennifer Ritterhouse, *Growing Up Jim Crow: How Black and White Southern Children Learned Race* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina: 2006), 20.

extent of racial interaction would have, likewise, differed depending on the social differentiations between white adults and children who visited the event. White visitors, therefore, complicated the upholding of Jim Crow laws and negotiation of racial interaction within the fair's midway.

### *The Conflict of Progress and Paternalism*

Black and white understandings of agricultural and industrial occupations diverged within the context of the fair. White newspapers accentuated the importance of black industrial and agricultural education and, in a biased way, viewed black roles as necessary only for bolstering white industry. Reports of the black fair, therefore, assumed that the exhibits of black industry, seen at the fair, echoed white views of black economic roles. However, this is not necessarily how the black community interpreted such uplift or how black education was promoted or understood within the fair. Agricultural exhibits highlighted this difference between black and white opinion concerning black industrial roles and agriculture. Uplift through agriculture was emphasised within the fair and it was estimated that eight to ten cars of agricultural exhibits from all over the state appeared on display.<sup>117</sup> Prominent black farmers gave speeches talking about their success; for example, F. Powell (first name unknown) spoke about how he owned ten thousand acres of Georgia land, stressing how he had made the move from sharecropper to landowner.<sup>118</sup> Powell embodied the economic benefits of black uplift, which ultimately resulted in landownership and independence from white landlords. By contrast, whites supported the promotion of industrial and

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<sup>117</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

agricultural roles because they ensured the perpetuation of black agricultural tenants and sharecroppers. The fair was, therefore, subject to differing black and white interpretations of African Americans' agricultural role.

Conversely, the focus on agriculture meant that there was no stress on what was considered "classical education," such as poetry, art and literature, subjects, which were deemed the hallmarks of an educated society and, by association, civilised races. Accommodationism focused on practical and agricultural vocations and it was subsequently seen to limit the educational opportunities for many African Americans and similarly confirm stereotypes of black ignorance. For many it demonstrated what was viewed as the "basic parochialism" of Washington's approach.<sup>119</sup>

Images of black progress, and the support of white businessmen, still continued to create resentment amongst lower-class whites.<sup>120</sup> Granting limited racial uplift contrasted with the desires of the lower-class whites, a section of the community who needed the Jim Crow system to structure white supremacy, as there were few economic and social differences between themselves and black citizens. At times, the commentary surrounding the fair almost appeared to incite tensions between blacks and lower-class whites. Despite not mentioning what it consisted of, the *Atlanta Independent* stated that, during the 1910 exhibit of Charlie Land, "every white man, who viewed it with us, said it was 35 per cent better in diversity than the best exhibit at the white fair".<sup>121</sup> In 1913, Harry Roberts, secretary of the white state fair, proclaimed that it would make "any

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<sup>119</sup> Allen B. Ballard, *The Education of Black Folks: The Afro-American Struggle for Knowledge in White America* (Lincoln, Nebraska: iUniverse, 2004), 20.

<sup>120</sup> White resentment of blacks as a factor to the 1906 riot is discussed in Chapter One, 52.

<sup>121</sup> *Atlanta Independent*, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1910.

good white farmer envious if they could see the products of the colored farmers”.<sup>122</sup> This marked encouragement of black farmers over whites publicly blurred economic boundaries between the two and appeared in many dialogues to favour the work of the black farmer. The black fair, therefore, provided a microcosm in which a white business agenda and associated class antagonisms operated. Black progress was still a considerable threat to the lower-class white community.<sup>123</sup> Rather than doubt black ability, as many white images in popular culture suggested, white southerners in fact “feared the potential economic and social power of black southerners”.<sup>124</sup>

This inherent contradiction was at the heart of the fair: the threat of black progress was exactly what the fair embodied; yet it was openly supported by white citizens. Whites needed to find a way to be involved with the fair without upsetting the social balance of white supremacy. White paternalism helped alleviate this threat as, in “keeping with contemporary notions of social Darwinism, New South ideologues correlated whiteness with modernity and believed that white workers were more adept at modern industry, so whites were more adept at leading modern civilization”.<sup>125</sup> White support thus took on historical contours as white speakers referred nostalgically to black and white relationships as understood through slavery. Interpreting black labour in historic terms meant that black labourers were available to assist southern economic development, but

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<sup>122</sup> *Macon News*, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1913.

<sup>123</sup> This was discussed in Chapter One in relation to the Atlanta race riot, p.52.

<sup>124</sup> Erin Elizabeth Clune, “The New South in Transnational Perspective” in Susanna Delfino (ed.), *Global Perspectives on Industrial Transformation in the American South* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 206.

<sup>125</sup> Clune, “The New South in Transnational Perspective”, 205.



whites guided and shaped the overarching agenda.<sup>126</sup> Combined with cultural white supremacy, nostalgia helped contain the fears of lower-class whites as it created a glass ceiling, which limited black progress.

The black fair performed a practical function for the white community by providing a means through which they could grant the African American community a degree of racial space without challenging existing racial or economic stratifications. For example in 1912, when supporting Wright's application for a semi-centennial anniversary celebration of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, Judge W. R. Hammond declared: "They do not ask to usurp the place of the white man, nor to mix and mingle in his affairs; but are content to stand alone, by themselves, in a little corner of the white man's civilization, and make their humble exhibit to their white friends".<sup>127</sup> By offering the black community these small rewards whites created a stable economic system in which their businesses could thrive. Consequently, Macon's black fair can be viewed through the lens of what Joel Williamson has termed an idealised sense of paternalism, under which African Americans were granted limited space in order to support the status quo of white supremacy. Idealised paternalism granted rewards for the black community, but allowed the guiding hand of paternalism to control and define such rewards in the best interests of the white community. The fair then provided a market to those southern businessmen who favoured white supremacy, but also deliberately fostered limited black uplift in order to promote racial accord, creating a more

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> General Deficiency Bill, Hearings conducted by the subcommittee Messrs J. J. Fitzgerald (chairman), Charles L. Bartlett, Thomas U. Sisson, Joseph G. Cannon, and Frederick H. Gillett of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives in charge of deficiencies for the fiscal year 1912 and prior years. Statement of Judge W. R. Hammond, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1912, 7.

pragmatic segregation rather than a completely rigid system. The favourable reporting of the black fair and the tone employed by Macon's white newspapers created a public illusion that blacks were being treated fairly, even generously, within Macon's community. Utilising the medium of the fair, Macon's newspapers bolstered a specific image of a benevolent and tolerant white community. In the long term, such an image would allow white authorities to castigate more forcefully those who stepped outside white-imposed boundaries.

Macon's white citizens ensured that the event was policed by members of the white community, suggesting their on-going need to control the activities of the black community. In 1909, Macon's white head of police proclaimed that the "conduct among the negroes attending the park has been almost perfect", claiming fewer arrests had been made than at the Macon state fair. Consequently, Westcott and other officials were all "greatly pleased with the good behaviour of the negroes".<sup>128</sup> Statements like these served to validate the existence of the fair to white readers; they "showed" that the institution of the fair encouraged peaceful race relations and docile behaviour from the black community, thus making the white establishment more willing to allow the fair to continue. This sense of accommodationist paternalism, combined with the fair's purpose in encouraging civil race relations, made white attendance more acceptable than attending the fair purely as a recreational event. Reports of grateful African American citizens, who welcomed the support of "white friends" at the fair, contrasted with tales of black citizens who disrupted or rebelled against white-dominated social order. Consequently, the fair and the bi-racial relationship reported by white newspapers

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<sup>128</sup>*Macon News*, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1909.

created visions of harmony against which dissenting black citizens were compared and judged.

Racial tensions continued to flare during the early twentieth century and during 1912, the militia was called to several incidents in Georgia. Race riots broke out in Cumming, Forsyth County, after two white females were allegedly sexually assaulted in two separate incidents. While Forsyth was around 128 miles away from Bibb County, where the Macon fair was based, it demonstrates how fraught race relations were. According to the *Greensburgh Daily Tribune*, Cummings was declared to be in a state of terror after reports of “negroes arming several miles south of Cummings for an attack on the place increased anxiety and resulted in a sort of martial law being proclaimed”. According to the report, white men were also arming and “troops were being held in readiness at Marietta and Gainesville to be rushed here at the first sign of trouble”.<sup>129</sup> The *Tribune* was a white paper and, subsequently, such reports were no doubt exaggerated. Such hysteria, however, revealed heightened racial tensions.

In October 1912, a few weeks before Augusta’s black fair opened its gates for the fourth time, the civil situation was precarious. The *Atlanta Journal* reported on an “unfortunate incident at Augusta, when several citizens were killed for refusing to obey orders of the militia”.<sup>130</sup> Although the Augusta riot was the product of economic strife within the local community rather than race conflicts, Atlanta’s riot had demonstrated how economic strife could quickly lead to violence against black citizens. Riots and

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<sup>129</sup>*Greensburgh Daily Tribune*, September 12<sup>th</sup>, 1912.

<sup>130</sup> Transcribed from the *Atlanta Journal*, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1912 by Brenda Webb and annotated by Donna Parrish as found on <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~gaforsyt/articles/1912news.html> (02.01.09).

heightened tensions meant that black citizens were at risk, as white citizens adopted a mob mentality, which increased the risk of community violence. The town had protested after the mayor had refused to remove policemen from the streetcars, following attacks on non-union workers employed by street railway company. Sympathizers and strikers had clashed with union members following a mass meeting and state troops and local firemen had been called out to deal with the mob.<sup>131</sup> News of Augusta's riot even reached Canada whose *Montreal Gazette* detailed the "fatal riot in Georgia", describing how state troops used carbines to disperse strikers.<sup>132</sup>

Military intervention in small towns demonstrated how Augusta's black citizens needed and used the medium of local fairs to stress the communal ties and relationship that black residents had with the white community. In many ways, the fair performed a similar function to that of Macon's black fair in 1906. It allowed and created a public dialogue between the black and white communities, a feature that made the fair more significant during such turbulent periods. The 1912 Opening Address for Augusta's "Negro" Fair, entitled "Peace between the Races at the South", was given by Rev. Carroll who stressed the unique environment of conciliation that existed locally between races stating that "[i]n time of riot in Augusta, Mr Jackson wouldn't let anyone hurt Floyd or Walker; a plenty of these white people around here who have got good old colored nurses and cooks and carriage-drivers and yard-boys, wouldn't let anyone harm them - they would go out and fight for them, if need be die for them, because these people are serving them - are polite and dutiful".<sup>133</sup> Carroll's words stressed that whites

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<sup>131</sup>*Atlanta Constitution*, September 27<sup>th</sup>, 1912.

<sup>132</sup>*Montreal Gazette*, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1912.

<sup>133</sup>*Augusta Chronicle*, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1912.

would protect the black community, but that this shelter would only be offered for as long as blacks recognised and stayed in menial positions attending to the white community. Carroll's statement recognised the dynamics, which inherently operated within the concept of paternalism and acknowledged the limitations that white paternalism placed upon black mobility in the long term. In the short term, however, Carroll's words demonstrate how the black community deliberately evoked such sentiments in order to gain white protection. The tense backdrop of Augusta a few weeks before the 1912 fair deemed such paternalistic protection necessary, and indeed vital, to black well-being.

Racial violence appeared to have lessened by 1917, as Georgia's lynching rates had more than halved from fifteen reported incidents in 1912 to seven in 1917.<sup>134</sup> Paternalistic dialogues still operated in this later period and the 1917 fair helps highlight how black and white use of the accommodationism differed. Displays of nostalgia undermined and contradicted the sense of progress, which black organisers sought to display within the fair. The frequently employed plantation stereotype of Sambo revealed a white yearning for blacks to be docile and childlike. This was demonstrated during the 1917 black fair when J. C. Maness, a representative for the state Board of Entomology, declared to his black audience, "I wish we had more of the old plantation Negroes...He is one of the good things out of the past you would do well to imitate".<sup>135</sup> White visions of a black industrial future were thus developed from a collective past of slavery and menial labour. These visions limited black uplift by confining African Americans to economically restricted domestic and industrial positions, presenting an

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<sup>134</sup> Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 276-79.

<sup>135</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1917.

economic rationale behind such nostalgic recollections of the plantation “Negro”. Walter M. Brasch asserts, “it was an inbred belief among whites that because of their antebellum experience blacks were the master gardeners, farmers, unskilled labourers, and cooks”.<sup>136</sup> The fair’s promotion of these specific types of work can be seen in 1907 when the *Macon News* stated that “industrial education was emphasized and the fact pointed out that the negro’s future depended upon his ability as a laborer”.<sup>137</sup>

Black stereotypes, fuelled by white nostalgia, were particularly apparent in the celebrated appearance of the “ole Mammy”, who participated in culinary competitions at the black fair. For instance, the 1911 fair featured dishes such as “possum and ‘taters”, which “only the old negro cooks know how to prepare”.<sup>138</sup> The *Macon Telegraph* declared “mammy” was back in “the sphere in which she was queen in slavery days and this especial art seems to be hers in time of freedom”.<sup>139</sup> The stereotype of the “black Mammy” was particularly pervasive in southern mythology, making the transition from the days of slavery into the twentieth-century culture. Grace Hale has argued that “[r]acial identity within the culture of segregation depended in more ways than one upon the symbolic power of the mammy—being white meant having black help”.<sup>140</sup> The persistence of the “black Mammy” figure is seen through the endurance of the trademark fictional character, Aunt Jemima, who was used to market

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<sup>136</sup> Walter M. Brasch, *Black English and the Mass Media* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), 114-15.

<sup>137</sup> *Macon News*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1907.

<sup>138</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>139</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>140</sup> Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage, 1998), 103.

pancake mixture and other domestic products. Aunt Jemima's appearance at the 1893 World Columbian Exposition in Chicago was so successful, in fact, that she was given a medal and a certificate by fair organisers.<sup>141</sup>

In many ways, the "black Mammy" was the ultimate construct of the subjugated labourer, as she not only provided sustenance for her white master or mistress, but also appeared to accept her role with a docile and cheerful servility. Consequently the "black Mammy" became a cherished stereotype as she posed no significant threat to the existing social system of white supremacy, but rather reinforced it. Whilst Aunt Jemima performed a mythological function for the white community, it also had a very practical function: fabled stereotypes of the "old mammy" served to define black women and confine them to the role of housekeeper and cook. It was an image used not only to propagate a white-based economy, but also to justify the South's system of white supremacy.

Images of the "black mammy" helped generate white support for ventures such as fairs and expositions. When supporting Wright's petition for a semi-centennial exposition Judge Hammond asserted that "[w]e loved the old slave mammy and the old slave playmate of the by gone times and we want to do all in our power to encourage and help them, and we want to bequeath this sentiment to the generations of southern white people who are fast taking our places".<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Marilyn Kern-Foxworth, *Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben and Rastus: Blacks in Advertising Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (Westport, Connecticut : Praeger Publishing, 1994), 67.

<sup>142</sup> General Deficiency Bill, Hearings conducted by the subcommittee Messrs J. J. Fitzgerald (chairman), Charles L. Bartlett, Thomas U. Sisson, Joseph G. Cannon, and Frederick H. Gillett of the Committee on

Antebellum historical roles and bonds between blacks and whites were not only espoused by whites, but were also emphasised by black leaders and speakers at the fair through references to an “old-time negro”. When Margaret James Murray appeared at the 1907 fair, she insisted that it was “the same devotion to duty [that] characterised the negro of today that made the old-time negro so trustworthy”.<sup>143</sup> Such statements helped encourage white attendance, stressing that “many ex-slaves and old ‘Mammies’” came to the fair as possible.<sup>144</sup> The construct of the plantation “Negro” provided a historical referent for whites against which they could favourably compare “the negro of today”. Black industry was, therefore, made more palatable to whites as it did not seem too far removed from the role that African Americans had previously performed during slavery.

One of the most high profile of these nostalgia-infused events was “Ex-Slave Day”, which was regularly held at the black fair and depicted a specific type of collective reminiscence regarding the antebellum South. During this day, former white masters were invited to the fair to interact with former slaves, recalling memories of the southern past. White guest speakers, who spoke at the day in 1909, cited the “strong attachment between the old slave and the old white man of the south”, further emphasising that they “would stand by each other in times of need or distress”.<sup>145</sup> This narrative of blacks and whites joining together through the medium of “Ex-Slave Day,” was also common within newspaper reports. In 1914, the *Atlanta Constitution* stated

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Appropriations, House of Representatives in charge of deficiencies for the fiscal year 1912 and prior years. Statement of Judge W. R. Hammond, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1912, 6-7.

<sup>143</sup>*Macon News*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1907.

<sup>144</sup>*Macon News*, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1913.

<sup>145</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1909.



that, at Macon's black fair, "300 of these old time darkies were on the grounds. Many white people took advantage of the special invitation extended to them to attend the fair today and the crowd was one of the largest ever seen."<sup>146</sup> It is significant that "Ex-Slave Day" was traditionally held when whites had been given a "special invitation" to visit the black fair. Historian Leon Litwack argues, "the meeting of the Ex-Slaves' Association often coincided with these fairs and became highly publicized rituals that fed white nostalgia. On both sides, selective memories prevailed, most of the recollections dwelling on the kindly relations said to have characterized black and white interaction during slavery".<sup>147</sup>

Such nostalgic remembrance defined "Ex-Slave Day" at Macon's Black Fair. Narratives of close harmony often accompanied stories of these reunions, linking the joy of the event to the sense of community and celebration that African Americans had apparently experienced through the institution of slavery.<sup>148</sup> This nostalgia elided the brutality of slavery and, instead, focused on the paternalistic bond, which had been mythically encapsulated through the white role of master and that of the black "childlike" slave. As the *Macon Telegraph* claimed, "Ex-Slave Day" was intended to "show the old time darkies the best time they have had since they used to gather together in 'massa's' big barn and shuffled their nimble feet to the tune of 'Dixie' pouring faith from the strings of 'Uncle Tom's' banjo".<sup>149</sup> By deliberately fabricating the region's plantation past, the

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<sup>146</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1914.

<sup>147</sup> Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Vintage, 1999), 190.

<sup>148</sup> Wright organized a separate jubilee of Ex-Masters and Ex-Slaves in 1913, Patton, "Major Richard Robert Wright, Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia, 1880-1920", 633.

<sup>149</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1910.

tableaux of the ex-slave implied a shared sense of black and white nostalgia for the old days of the plantation, but it was a memory which was not collective.

The divergence between white memory and the reality of slavery was, ironically, stressed by the narratives of the ex-slaves recalled in the white newspaper. For example, the newspaper summarised the recollections of Robert Carson from Dodge County, whose master used to “whip him with a walking stick”, confirming the brutality experienced by slaves.<sup>150</sup> Wright’s personal history, likewise, contradicted the contentment of slaves’ paternalistic relationship with their master. He often cited in his speeches the occasion when his mother was given the choice to stay with her master, instead she replied, “Master, if I am free, free to go when I choose and whenever I desire, I will go tomorrow”.<sup>151</sup> Despite the semblance of union, it is indicative that recalled nostalgia of slavery by blacks was performed for white audiences. Such falsified memories were used in order to forge an amicable relationship with whites, thereby facilitating racial interactions for the black community. Conversely Carson’s account of white cruelty points to tension which existed between black leaders who colluded in this nostalgia and ordinary African Americans.

Macon’s “Ex-Slave Day” also provided economic and practical benefits for the black fair as a whole. As Leon Litwack has stressed, it was “partially with an eye towards white patronage, [that] black organizers of ‘colored fairs’ invited former slaves to participate in ceremonies recalling the old times”.<sup>152</sup> These acts of bi-racial conciliation

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<sup>150</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>151</sup> *Bulletin of Atlanta University*, No. 72, 1896.

<sup>152</sup> Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 190.

allowed organisers to endear the black fair to Macon's white community and, as a result, many white benefactors were willing to help with financial arrangements and "in some instances the white friends of the ex-slaves [have] made up the necessary amount to defray the expenses of their trip".<sup>153</sup> This paternalism subsequently boosted black fair attendance, both through financial aid for former slaves to attend and the encouragement of white benefactors. Consequently, through such nostalgia-infused days, organisers were able to encourage the white patronage, economic assistance and attendance that were so vital to the fair's survival.

Acknowledging the kindness of their "white friends in Georgia", black speakers and organisers often paid tribute to white benevolence.<sup>154</sup> White speakers attributed such generosity to be the result of the shared southern history between blacks and whites during slavery, which they claimed created a unique understanding between the races in the present. For example, at Macon's 1911 black fair, after a speech which wistfully recalled the antebellum days of his youth, Judge Hillyer stated that while "our northern friends have done much they have been very kind in assisting the education of negroes in the South and we are very grateful for it, but I simply want to let it be known that where the northern people have given one dollar, the southern people have given twenty".<sup>155</sup> The North was perceived to be ignorant in understanding the "historical" relationship that blacks and whites shared in the South. Hillyer's words also reveal the resentment of many southerners towards northern philanthropists who had financially assisted southern blacks after Reconstruction. Ironically, Booker T. Washington was

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<sup>153</sup>*Macon News*, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1913; *Macon Telegraph*, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1910.

<sup>154</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>155</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

involved with, and had been assisted by, many northern philanthropists and their support was closely integrated into accommodationist politics.

When Dr J. H. Dillard gave a speech during the 1911 black fair's Education Day, his appearance alone contradicted Hillyer's claim that white southerners had contributed more to black education than northerners.<sup>156</sup> Dillard was secretary of the Jeanes Foundation, a programme established by Anna Jeanes in Philadelphia in 1907, which was designed to support black rural schools. Dillard's appearance created an interesting discrepancy, within the context of the fair, contrasting the practical benefits wrought by institutions such as the Jeanes fund, against the claims of Hillyer that white southerners had contributed more towards black education. Dillard's words similarly demonstrated the eagerness and role of the black community in creating their own educational institutions and the sense of religious charity involved with their work stating that the "country school teacher was a missionary, and that he [Dillard] had found in all the work of the Jeanes foundation for the last three years that the colored people themselves were anxious for better schools and were willing to give of their own means in order to have them".<sup>157</sup>

### *Shared Economic Concerns*

The assumed philanthropy of Southern white citizens and employers who supported the "Negro fair" masked underlying economic considerations. By giving sponsorship and economic help to the black fair, the white business community was, in effect, expanding

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<sup>156</sup>*Atlanta Independent*, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>157</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

their black clientele. Grace Hale argues that inter-racial trade was uncertain and “[c]ommercer depended, then, upon a great deal of white denial over the contradictions between market incentives and segregation’s linkage of white supremacy to superior white spaces”.<sup>158</sup> Segregation meant that blacks were consigned to inferior social and economic spaces, though whites were able to participate in such spaces when there were financial benefits to be gained from such interaction. The black fair was therefore perceived to be a superior black space where whites allowed themselves to benefit economically from racial interaction. Such interaction also demonstrated how the boundaries of separate white and black spheres were fluid when it proved financially worthwhile. In 1906, the *Augusta Chronicle* reported, “Macon’s businessmen were almost solidly of the opinion that the fair should prove beneficial to the city” and to stop it would “impair Macon’s chances in the future for conventions, and other similar events. The businessmen went actively to work in behalf of the granting to negroes the property, and it is conceded that their influence had a strong effect upon the council’s action last night”.<sup>159</sup> By demonstrating acceptable forms of social paternalism towards Macon’s African Americans, white businessmen were able to access customers within Macon’s black community without breaking any racial boundaries enforced by the Jim Crow system. White business at the black fair was again emphasised when, in 1914, whilst demonstrating “their appreciation of the progressive negroes of the state,” Macon’s business community, along with the city’s mayor and councilmen, agreed to attend the fairground for a day entitled “Merchants’ Day”.<sup>160</sup> The benefits of black

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<sup>158</sup> Hale, *Making of Whiteness*, 185.

<sup>159</sup> *Augusta Chronicle*, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>160</sup> *Macon News*, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1914.

consumerism allowed merchants to ignore any noticeable contradictions or blurring of normally segregated lines.

In a wider historical context, the actions of the white businessmen demonstrated a tradition of pragmatism within the southern community, one which was rooted in economic self-interest. Matthew Lassiter argues that the same logic was used in the 1950s and 1960s as white moderates supported token school desegregation before court orders triggered massive resistance. Lassiter demonstrates that the economic consequences of massive resistance included “the departure of the state’s industrial base and the absence of a skilled workforce adequate to the requirements of a modern society”. Because of these economic interests “silent moderates” welcomed a “pragmatic path ‘out of the morrass’”.<sup>161</sup>

The black fair meant that many concession stand operators increased their revenue during fair period and subsequently many appeared at both the white and black fair. Reports show that, in some years, the attractions and exhibits at the white state fair were also secured for the Negro fair.<sup>162</sup> In 1909, concession men stated that business had been “every bit as good during the negro fair as when the Macon state fair was in progress”.<sup>163</sup> Such interactions between white concession owners and black customers produced inter-racial consumer spaces, which showed how ambiguous white attitudes towards segregation could be when profit was involved.

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<sup>161</sup> Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Majority in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 35.

<sup>162</sup> *Macon News*, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1909.

<sup>163</sup> *Macon News*, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1909.

Through events such as the fairs, blacks and whites established a relationship based on consumerism. This was not a one-way dialogue, which solely benefited the black fair as black organisers promoted white businesses and products that, in turn, helped them secure white patronage. Such patronage also helped black organisers obtain donations and support from white businesses, which helped them economically. For whites, such donations highlighted their generosity whilst also advertising their businesses and expanding their client base. An example can be seen in the premium list for Augusta's 1908 black fair, which depended on securing "sufficient advertisements from the white businessmen of the city to insure the cost of publishing".<sup>164</sup> Augusta's African American fair organisers, such as Reverend Silas X. Floyd, were similarly part of a committee, which went to "visit the white citizens and collect the usual donations given at this season of the year to help in putting on the corn show".<sup>165</sup>

The newspaper included a list of individual merchants and private citizens who had donated money, clearly advertising the businesses that had helped to support Augusta's black fair. In 1912, these included patrons such as J. S. White & Co; Irish-American Bank; Union Savings Bank and Mr. Thomas Murphy, postmaster.<sup>166</sup> White donations to the black fair could combine business opportunities with a projected sense of philanthropy towards black citizens. Floyd made this beneficial relationship explicit in his column for the *Augusta Chronicle*, asserting, "I am in the position to know that much business has always followed the leaving of the white exhibits at our fair. Our President, Dr. Walker, and our first Vice-President, Professor P. H. Craig, are both

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<sup>164</sup>*Augusta Chronicle*, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1908.

<sup>165</sup>*Augusta Chronicle*, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1912.

<sup>166</sup>*Augusta Chronicle*, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1912.

going to have their home wired by the Augusta-Aiken Railway and Electric Corporation and begin using electricity because the company was willing to leave their splendid exhibit in the center of the main building for our people to see”.<sup>167</sup> Floyd also acknowledged that the *Augusta Chronicle* “always increase[d] the number of their readers and subscribers by giving such generous space to our ‘write-ups’”.<sup>168</sup> Organisers of the fair, then, were seen to endorse certain products and utilise that endorsement in exchange for white patronage.

The black fair also highlighted that the political and economic concerns of the black and white communities could, at points, overlap. Black migration was an issue with economic implications for both communities, and historical narratives that stressed the intimate relationship between blacks and whites were often used to dissuade African Americans from leaving the South. From 1910 to 1930, over a million and a half blacks left the South, with a large number leaving between 1916 and 1919, a time subsequently entitled “The Great Migration”.<sup>169</sup> Many African Americans relocated to the North, West and Mid-Western states, hoping to find better employment opportunities and to escape the crippling effects of racism in the South. Fears of losing their black workforce offer another reason as to why whites were more willing to accept limited black space, such as the fair, and a degree of racial uplift. With more industrial opportunities following America’s involvement in World War I, northern black publications, such as the *Chicago Defender*, mounted a publicity campaign, which urged black southerners to join the migration and to seek a better life in the North. Ross F. Collins consequently

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<sup>167</sup> *Augusta Chronicle*, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1912.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Luther S. Luedtke, *Making America: The Society & Culture of the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 354.



argues in his study of World War I that the “white South reacted with fear as it faced the possibility of losing the cheap labor that had sustained its culture” and steps were taken to limit black migration which included banning the *Defender*.<sup>170</sup> In Georgia black migration was deemed to be a significant problem and, while statistics are difficult to determine, it is estimated that as many as 250,000 blacks may have left the state between 1917 and 1924.<sup>171</sup>

Speakers at the black fair often referred to the bond shared between African Americans and white southerners as one of the reasons that blacks should stay in the South. In 1911, black orator and clergyman, Dr Charles Walker, urged the African American audience at Augusta’s black fair to “settle down and stay right here in the South. There is a tie, which binds blacks and whites, which can never be broken. Our relations may be strained for a season: we may fall out now and then: but nothing except death can ever permanently separate the blacks and the whites of the South”.<sup>172</sup> Walker’s words sought to emphasise how African Americans in the South were in a better position than those in the North due to their relationship with the region’s whites. It offered an image of amicable black and white relationships and a counter response to migrating African Americans who sought to escape the violence of lynch mobs and the racial discrimination, which pervaded their everyday lives. In arguing that the South offered more benefits for blacks, Walker’s words took on an accommodationist slant and attempted to offer a pause for thought to those in the audience who sought to migrate to northern states. Likewise, in 1917, at Macon’s black fair, black orator and nephew of

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<sup>170</sup> Ross F. Collins, *World War I: Primary Documents on Events from 1914 to 1919* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008), 196.

<sup>171</sup> Brundage, *Lynching the in the New South*, 228.

<sup>172</sup> *Augusta Chronicle*, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

Booker T. Washington, Roscoe Conkling Simmons, “advised the negroes to stay in the South where their dead are buried and their ways are understood”, an argument which, again, presented the South as the historic home for many African Americans, as opposed to the North.<sup>173</sup>

Accommodationist dialogues encouraging African Americans to stay in the South created an overlap between black and white dialogues and both stressed the benefits of the rural South in contrast to the industrialised North.<sup>174</sup> Wright had previously been involved with organising the Georgia Agricultural Association, which attempted to place rural life in a favourable light by “publicizing the advantages and improvements in farming and sponsoring fairs and expositions at which the agricultural community could be displayed” and the organization later formed part of the 1906 State Fair.<sup>175</sup> The benefits of rural life were similarly promoted against those of the corrupt vices of the city: “President Wright hopes to make the Negro farmer see that rural life is the best life for the masses; that there is more help, more comfort and in the end more money than there is in the crowded cities”.<sup>176</sup> In 1914, Bibb County’s exhibit contained cards bearing “Back to the farm” on display.<sup>177</sup> Washington ideology similarly promoted rural agriculture as a form of black uplift and “touted the rural South - contrasted against the city and the North - as Negroes’ historic home and hence the place where they would

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<sup>173</sup> *Macon News*, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1918.

<sup>174</sup> Waldo Martin, “In Search of Booker T. Washington: Up from Slavery, History and Legend” in Fitzhugh Brundage (ed.), *Booker T. Washington and Black Progress: Up from Slavery 100 Years Later* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 48.

<sup>175</sup> Patton, “Major Richard Robert Wright, Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia, 1880-1920”, 498.

<sup>176</sup> *Atlanta Independent*, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1910.

<sup>177</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1914.

best progress". Washington's ideology was therefore "pro-self-help, pro-business, pro-southern, and pro-rural", all of which were closely intertwined.<sup>178</sup> This pro-rural sentiment again demonstrated a division in black thought, one which oscillated between the negative effects, feared by Washington, and positive benefits, as espoused by the *Chicago Defender*, of northern migration.

As a result, the black attendees of the fair were often taught a future defined by their past, a future which urged the black community to stay amongst the white southern communities who understood and looked after them and also to stay on the southern farms with which they similarly shared a symbiotic relationship. Speakers at Macon's black fair repeatedly advised the African American audience to stay in the South, as Margaret James Murray Washington did in 1907 when she spoke of the South "being the most desirable habitation of the negro because of him being well adapted to the climate and to the class of work that is here offered in such great abundance".<sup>179</sup> Wright, likewise, stated at the 1914 fair, "we have appealed most earnestly to the colored people to stay on the farm".<sup>180</sup> These messages were ultimately unsuccessful as African Americans continued to migrate out of Georgia during the early twentieth century, with 68,000 leaving in the first four months of 1923 alone.<sup>181</sup>

Black migration out of the South obviously meant a reduced black labour force for white industrialists, which directly affected the southern economy. The fair, however, also reflected economic concerns, which reveal a specific black middle class and

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<sup>178</sup> Martin, "In Search of Booker T. Washington", 48.

<sup>179</sup> *Macon News*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1907.

<sup>180</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1914.

<sup>181</sup> Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 228.

business agenda. Encouraging fellow African Americans to stay in the South meant there would be a strong black consumer base within the local community. Self-employed African Americans or business owners would have had more difficulties packing up and establishing their businesses in another city and they were, therefore, confined to the Southern communities, making it necessary for their own interests to encourage the black population to stay and claim a sense of black space. Dittmer notes that, due to the nature of the black organisers' professions, they were reliant on black clientele as, while "black workers depended primarily on white employers; in contrast, black doctors, lawyers and businessmen relied on black patronage".<sup>182</sup> Segregation, likewise, meant that black stores were only frequented by black customers. Consequently, migration would have affected the black business community's customer base.

The disadvantages of accommodationism for the southern black masses were, therefore, highlighted through these dialogues, as they demonstrated how black leaders used accommodationist dialogues to further their own interests. The industrial urban economy of the North offered the opportunity for many blacks the chance to escape the squalor and limited employment opportunities they experienced in the South. Essentially migration offered the chance for many to break away from a relationship of dependency with whites, one which accommodationism drew many African Americans further into.

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<sup>182</sup> Dittmer, *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era*, 34-35.

Other black leaders, besides Washington, also actively sought to halt migration out of the South.<sup>183</sup> In an 1897 essay titled ‘The Problem of Amusement’, Du Bois had stressed his concerns about black migration out of the South, arguing that the improvement of recreational facilities could act as an antidote to the migratory trend.<sup>184</sup> In addition to messages that urged blacks to stay in the South, the promotion of black occupations and industries at the fair helped to counteract the lure of better wages and work in the North. Organisers and professionals, therefore, used the fair to exhibit black job opportunities. Besides affecting the black customer base, migration also affected the strength of black uplift movements within the South. Without a base of aspiring blacks through whom to preach and obtain this uplift, the ideology lacked any physical momentum. Dialogues which stressed harmonious black and white community relations at the fair, then, helped to defuse the racial violence encountered by many southern blacks and created a basis on which to further accommodationist relationships. Fon Louise Gordon argues that, subsequently, migration provided the opportunity for many black leaders to push forward their middle-class concerns of which “educational opportunities provided a particularly attractive cause”.<sup>185</sup> The combination of educational and industrial opportunities presented during the fair therefore made it an ideal event in which to thrust a middle-class black agenda into the public arena.

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<sup>183</sup> Gordon, *Caste and Class*, 124.

<sup>184</sup> William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, “The Problem of Amusement” in Dan S. Green and Edwin D. Driver (eds.), *W.E.B Du Bois on Sociology and the Black Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 231.

<sup>185</sup> Gordon, *Caste and Class*, 124.

### *Conclusion*

Promoting accommodationism through speeches and events at the fair meant that black organisers were able to gain the assistance of the white community, assistance needed during this period in order to achieve a sense of black space peacefully. The fair ultimately demonstrated the necessity for accommodationism as black and white lives were often closely bound together through employment and economic relations. Segregation was, however, complicated at the black fair, which demonstrated how the separation of the two races could never be completely fixed. The involvement of the white community in the fair's proceedings exemplifies how accommodationism limited black prospects in the long term through pre-existing notions of paternalism, patronage and prejudice. White nostalgia helped to consign blacks to menial industrial and labouring roles.

Examining black and white relationships at the black fair, likewise, demonstrated how the interests of the white business class and the black middle class intersected along various economic and political issues. The interests of the black business community were, therefore, at odds with those of the lower black classes. Tensions surrounding the fair's management also highlighted internal divisions in the black middle class, showing that it was not a cohesive unit. What crucially emerged from black middle-class interpretations of progress at the fair is how it helped psychologically and economically to empower this aspiring sector of the black community. The fair provided an arena in which black interpretations of progress and uplift were positively translated and promoted to black audience members. Accommodationism allowed the black

community to achieve a public space in which to consolidate images and narratives of black uplift.

### Chapter Three

#### Pushing the Boundaries of Accommodationism:

##### Displays of African American Identity and Achievement at Georgia's Black Fair

Georgia's black fairs stretched the boundaries of accommodationism beyond the purpose envisaged by whites, which would have limited blacks to specific industrial roles and subjugated social positions. Consequently, the event magnified what occurred on a daily basis, as African Americans adapted "the rules and regulations of Jim Crow to their own purposes, sustaining a delicate balance between appearing to comply with prescribed norms, on the one hand, and finding ways to subvert those norms on the other".<sup>1</sup> African American organisers were able to subvert the gaze of white society and create aspects in the black fairs that celebrated a sense of achievement and community. Overt displays of black success and social achievements within the fair pushed this subversion further as they appeared in a communal and public arena, thus managing to access a wider black audience.

Exhibits of black economic, educational, social and professional accomplishments presented radical and affirmative images of black uplift to African Americans who attended. Such messages and images would not have been sanctioned by the white community had they been delivered through more militant methods or associations. African American deference, therefore, helped acquire exhibitory spaces, which presented patrons with a more positive impression of the black community. Parades conducted by fair organisers in both Macon and Augusta, similarly intruded on Jim

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<sup>1</sup> William H. Chafe, Raymond Gavins and Robert Korstad, *Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Tell about Life in the Segregated South* (New York: New Press, 2001), xxxiii.



Crow boundaries by claiming black public space within downtown areas, thereby helping to create a sense of black citizenship and civic presence. Despite working within the constraints of Jim Crow, African Americans nonetheless succeeded in advancing their cause. Accommodationism, therefore, resulted in black space, economic leverage and images of black autonomy, all of which were potentially radical gains for such a socially subjugated community.

*Accommodationism, Black Recreation and Public Spaces*

According to Kathleen Clark, “commemorative affairs in the Jim Crow era represent black leaders’ efforts to achieve black interests by accommodating white power to varying degrees”. Such efforts demonstrated a much “greater variety in African American responses to rising white racism, and the accompanying historical theories, than traditional definitions of the period as the era of Booker T. Washington versus W. E. B Du Bois would have it”.<sup>2</sup> Like commemorative events, the black state fair developed the exhibitory space necessary to subvert any white antagonism that might have accompanied displays of black progress and citizenship. At the same time, it advanced a distinctly black agenda.

As discussed in Chapters One and Two, Booker T. Washington appeared at three black fairs in Georgia, as well as at white state fairs in Alabama and Georgia and provided a

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<sup>2</sup> Kathleen Clark, *Defining Moments: African American Commemoration and Political Culture in the South, 1863-1913* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 214.

link between the endeavours of the fairs.<sup>3</sup> While the majority of scholarly and popular opinion has often responded in a disparaging way to Washington's use of accommodationism, revisionist interpretations have, instead, explored the more positive aspects of black agency espoused by the strategy.<sup>4</sup> Revisionist analyses of Washington's strategy can be used to re-evaluate the function of accommodationism as a strategic tool within the black fair. August Meier was among the first to advance revisionist readings of Washington in his 1963 study entitled *Negro Thought in America: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington, 1880-1915*. Meier saw Washington as a social Janus, a figure whose response to racism was seemingly acquiescent in public, yet more resistant in private.<sup>5</sup> Historians have expanded on this work and, consequently, the cavernous ideological divide, that was once assumed existed between the politics of Du Bois and Washington, has narrowed. Robert Norrell has stressed that the "protest-accommodation dichotomy has obscured the fundamental similarity of the substance of Washington's action to the protest agenda put forward starting in 1909 by the National

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<sup>3</sup>There are references to Washington's appearance at fairs throughout the *Booker T. Washington Papers*. A poster for "Negro Day" at the Georgia State Fair on October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1899, at which Booker T. Washington appeared can be found in the Details of the Peyton Austin Allen inventory found at the Auburn Avenue Research Library, [http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/aafa/html/aafa\\_aarl94-006.html](http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/aafa/html/aafa_aarl94-006.html) (accessed 01.02.07). Washington also appeared at Albany's black fair in 1914. Washington's appearance at Macon's black fair is discussed in Chapter One pp.64-66.

<sup>4</sup> Chapter One has discussed the responses of scholars to Washington's politics and strategies, p.42.

<sup>5</sup>August Meier, *Negro Thought in America: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington, 1880-1915* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988).

Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)).<sup>6</sup> These similarities highlight the ways in which Washington's approach encouraged black agency.

The founder of the fair, Richard R. Wright, blurred assumed theoretical lines between accommodationism, as represented by Washington, and the radical policies espoused by Du Bois. As historian Donald Grant asserts, "Wright steered a course between the philosophies of Du Bois and Washington."<sup>7</sup> In fact, while at the Georgia State Industrial College (GSIC), Wright worked, at different times, with both Du Bois and with Washington. Wright had seen Du Bois speak in Savannah on the horrors of slavery and had afterwards voiced his approval of Du Bois and his speech.<sup>8</sup> In his role as Vice-President of the Board of Trustees of Atlanta University, Wright similarly supported the election of Du Bois "in the face of great opposition", which occurred "on account of Du Bois' so-called radical tendencies".<sup>9</sup> Wright had also, at the request of Du Bois, already been "doing some research of the field of the Business Urban Problems of Atlanta University Graduates".<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Robert J. Norrell, "Understanding the Wizard: Another Look at the Age of Booker T. Washington" in Fitzhugh Brundage (ed.), *Booker T. Washington and Black Progress: Up From Slavery 100 Years Later* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2003), 74.

<sup>7</sup> Donald Grant, *The Way it Was in the South: The Black Experience in the South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 247.

<sup>8</sup> Charles J. Elmore, *Richard R. Wright Sr. at GSIC, 1891-1921: A Protean Force for the Social Uplift and Higher Education of Black Americans* (Savannah, Georgia: Privately printed, 1996), 38.

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Ross Haynes, *The Black Boy of Atlanta* [1952] (New York: G. K. Hall, 1997), 374.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

In addition, Wright and Washington were involved in the organization of the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition of 1895.<sup>11</sup> In 1905, Washington gave a speech at the GSIC and Charles Elmore states that Washington was a friend of Wright.<sup>12</sup> In later years, Wright also had contact with Washington and corresponded with him on certain issues. For example, after Washington's appearance at the 1906 fair, Wright asked Washington to appeal to William Jennings Bryan to attend one of his state fairs. Bryan was a Democratic politician who, in various years, supported Free Silver (1896), anti-imperialism (1900) and trust busting (1908). Bryan also had strong religious and anti-Darwinistic views and is probably best known for his role in the Scopes trial in 1925. Washington accordingly wrote to Bryan, introducing Wright as a "conservative and sensible man" who "is doing fine work for our race".<sup>13</sup> Correspondence between Wright and Washington shows that they communicated with each other regarding various black educational endeavours. In 1909, Washington asked Wright "especially to be present" at the next "Annual Tuskegee Negro Conference with the Workers' Conference" which was designed to allow "officers and teachers of the institutions at work for the benefit of our race in the South, to come together and get acquainted with each other, and to hear experiences and get information and inspiration from each other".<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> June O. Patton, "Major Richard Robert Wright, Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia, 1880-1920" (Unpublished Ph. D dissertation, University of Chicago, 1980), 502.

<sup>12</sup> Elmore, *Richard R. Wright, Sr.*, 38.

<sup>13</sup> Haynes, *The Black Boy of Atlanta*, 375.

<sup>14</sup> Booker T. Washington to R. R. Wright, January 12<sup>th</sup> 1909, in Harriet Beecher Stowe Lemon (ed.), *Radio Speeches of Major R. R. Wright, Sr.* (Philadelphia: Farmer Press, 1949), 173.

Wright created communal organisations for many black people who worked within similar sectors or professions, initiating the Black Farmers' Conference and the National Negro Bar Association, both national associations, which emphasised black uplift through business and economic models. The black state fair originated through a communal meeting of a black farmers' conference in 1900.<sup>15</sup> Wright later stressed that it was the little things that marked out a "well-educated man", amongst which was "a deep interest in the welfare of his community".<sup>16</sup> Wright's daughter wrote that, "through the years he reached into the problems of his race and was found leading many movements vital to the welfare of a forward looking people".<sup>17</sup>

In reading the fair along the same lines as Wright's other ventures, we can see how it provided a place in which various groups could meet and engage with each other under the aegis of a recreational event. Women's conferences, fraternal associations, religious conferences and health delegations (along with the continued farmers' conference) were all held during the black state fair. Their appearance testified to the way in which the fair followed the model endorsed by Wright within his other ventures, a model of associative unity as a tool for racial uplift. The fair can, therefore, be seen to straddle the doctrines of Washington and Du Bois. It combined radical elements through its endorsement of economic betterment, yet, was also an event, which was put into action through accommodative spaces and co-operation with the white community.

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<sup>15</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1910.

<sup>16</sup> "A Chip on your Shoulder", Radio Remarks of Major R. R. Wright over station WIP, Sunday, Nov. 21, 1943, in Lemon (ed.), *Radio Speeches of Major R.R. Wright Sr.*, 96.

<sup>17</sup> "Brief Biographical Sketch of Major R. R. Wright Sr." in Lemon (ed.), *Radio Speeches of Major R. R. Wright Sr.*, xvii.

Amusement formed a common link between Du Bois, Wright and Washington, as they shared similar concerns regarding black morality and black migration and their relationship with African American recreation. The black fair in its contrast with other recreational spaces, especially those that involved alcohol, offered a more wholesome form of entertainment, which was in line with the concerns of the black middle class. The *Savannah Tribune*, for example, made sure to state, “no liquors were sold at any place on the grounds”.<sup>18</sup> In later years, Wright also expressed his concerns that the “daily business of our tap-rooms have absorbed too much of the savings of the laboring men”.<sup>19</sup> Even Du Bois, despite his criticism of Washington, had similar concerns about what he termed the “Problem of Amusement”. In his 1897 essay, Du Bois recognised the need for black recreational space, which he regarded as pivotal to encouraging young black people to stay in the country, a trend discussed earlier when demonstrating how both Wright and Washington urged those who attended the fair to stay in the South.<sup>20</sup>

Du Bois believed recreation forged a vital connection between black youth and black institutions. Such institutions were viewed as a way in which to revitalise the connection between black youth and their elders, whose aspirations differed from their own. Du Bois sought to bridge this gap by reassuring people that entertainment was not a sin, concluding, “American Negroes are forgetting to recognize for their children the God-given right to play; to recognize that there is a perfectly natural and legitimate

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<sup>18</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>19</sup> Radio remarks by Major R. R. Wright over station WIP, Sunday, April 23, 1944, 8.15 A.M, “The Safety of the Republic” in Lemon (ed.), *Radio Speeches of Major R. R. Wright, Sr.*, 127.

<sup>20</sup> See Chapter Two, p.120 for a discussion on speeches urging blacks to stay in the South.

demand for amusement on the part of the young people”.<sup>21</sup> Du Bois urged churches not to condemn automatically “gentlemanly games of skill”, such as billiards, just because of the game’s connection with drinking and gambling.<sup>22</sup> Instead, he urged a fresh approach towards amusement, stating that the “younger generation of Negroes are tired of the limited and hackneyed amusements the church offers, and the spiritual message of the church has been dulled by too indistinct and inopportune reiteration”.<sup>23</sup> Du Bois advocated that the responsibility of recreation should rest with home and schools, rather than the church. Such entertainment would then, in turn, help “strengthen and inspire us for renewed effort” in developing the “negro character to its highest and holiest possibilities”.<sup>24</sup> Wright, likewise, repeatedly expressed his belief that the “program for democracy should not, therefore, be designed solely for the children in the schools but should reach the parents and the adult world which condition the children’s environment and thinking”.<sup>25</sup> African American racial and national aspirations were, hence, explicitly tied into institutional and community endeavours.

Exhibits of black progress were not exclusively used to perpetuate an accommodationist policy but instead more broadly used to promote African American betterment in the

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<sup>21</sup> William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, “The Problem of Amusement” in Dan S. Green and Edwin D. Driver (eds.), *W. E. B. Du Bois on Sociology and the Black Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 231.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>24</sup> William Edward Burghardt Du Bois and Phil Zuckerman (ed.), *Du Bois on Religion* (Walnut Creek: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 28.

<sup>25</sup> “Too Little Too Late”, Radio Remarks by Major R. R. Wright, over station WIP, Sunday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1944, 8.15 A.M in Lemon (ed.), *Radio Speeches of Major R. R. Wright*, 117.

public eye. While Booker T. Washington participated in Georgia's black state fair, W. E. B. Du Bois was himself involved with numerous world fairs during the early twentieth century. At the 1900 Paris Exposition Du Bois, Thomas Calloway and Daniel A. P. Murray created an exhibit which included thousands of photographs, books, pamphlets, maps and charts chronicling the experience and progress of African Americans up to the year 1900.<sup>26</sup> It is probable that Georgia's black organisers took inspiration from this early exposition. The *Atlanta Bulletin* described the Paris exhibit as an "exhaustive social study of the Georgia Negro-Georgia, as having the largest Negro population of any state, being taken as a fair representative for the Negro". The *Bulletin* further argued, "The facts shown are on the whole decidedly encouraging, not only in regard to the material progress of the Negro but his intellectual progress as well".<sup>27</sup> Similarly, following Georgia's 1906 black fair, Monroe Work and Richard Wright, Jr. used demographics generated from the event in order to produce and publish a social study of black Georgians.<sup>28</sup>

Large-scale celebrations of black life were rare within public spaces in the South during the early twentieth century. In fact, there were only a handful of other black fairs established in the South during this period, specifically North Carolina (established in

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<sup>26</sup> Portraits and photographs from the exhibition are shown in David Levering Lewis and Deborah Willis, *A Small Nation of People: W.E.B. Dubois and African American Portraits of Progress* (New York: Amistad Press, 2003), 24-29; *Bulletin of Atlanta University*, 1900, No.10, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center, Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>27</sup> *Bulletin of Atlanta University*, 1900, No.10.

<sup>28</sup> *Bulletin of Atlanta University*, 1907, No. 171. The findings of Wright and Work's report are discussed in Chapter Three p.169.



1904) and Mississippi (1906).<sup>29</sup> Despite the fact that there were “few fairs, expositions, conferences, conventions, rallies, or protests in Georgia at which Wright was not called upon to speak”, he nonetheless acknowledged of the Georgia Black Fair that, “ours is indeed a unique celebration”.<sup>30</sup> Despite not being unique in the South, the black state fair was the first of its kind in Georgia. In fact, there were only limited occasions when Macon’s African American community could gather in the same numbers that appeared at the black fair. Similarly, there were few organisations, which combined secular, recreational and political concerns within one arena. There were geographical, social and recreational links between the black state fair and Emancipation Day celebrations, which were held yearly by African American communities to celebrate their freedom from the bonds of slavery. These celebrations, like the fairs, consisted of parades, keynote speeches, dramatic storytelling and pageantry.<sup>31</sup> Historian Paul Ortiz states that Emancipation Day allowed participants “to relax, let off steam, and renew contacts with old friends in other parts of the state”.<sup>32</sup> The fair similarly allowed patrons to mingle with other members of the black community, many of whom had visited from surrounding counties. The fair aimed to provide an uplifting experience and, before

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<sup>29</sup>*Atlanta Constitution*, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1906; “The Great Negro Fair. Bulletin No. 2. Raleigh North Carolina, October, 1904”, Documenting the American South, North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/fair/fair.html> (accessed 28/03/2009).

<sup>30</sup>Patton, “Major Richard Robert Wright, Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia, 1880-1920”, 517; *Savannah Tribune*, December, 16<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>31</sup> Paul Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 91-92.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

many visitors arrived, they were mailed a certificate inviting them to join the “Good Cheer Club”, which met daily during the state fair in order to “spread sunshine and happiness everywhere”.<sup>33</sup>

Emancipation Day was an event which contained displays of black-authored history and citizenship. Ortiz argues that it was “the centrepiece of black testimonial culture, a day to commemorate liberation as well as to mark the progress of the race. From the very beginning, African Americans transformed a day of remembrance into a public event that stressed their rights of citizenship”.<sup>34</sup> Through such events, Kathleen Clark asserts, southern blacks created a “vital *public* presence” through which they helped fashion “a broad spectrum of historical interpretations, all of which challenged the power of white Americans to define the past and ordain the future”.<sup>35</sup> Wright himself had previously emphasised how celebrations of black progress led to national inclusion and citizenship, such as during Atlanta University’s 1891 Emancipation exercises: “the progress of the race is steadily onward as it marches with others to the honoured place under the flag”.<sup>36</sup> He also participated in the 1913 Emancipation Day celebrations in Atlanta, using the day to stress the importance of hope for the future, while also using the occasion to highlight that white supremacists were the true traitors to the country, “a rhetorical move that tapped into long-standing traditions in black commemoration and reasserted

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<sup>33</sup> Haynes, *The Black Boy of Atlanta*, 82.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>35</sup> Clark, *Defining Moments*, 228.

<sup>36</sup> *Bulletin of Atlanta University*, No. 29, 1891, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center, Atlanta, Georgia.

an emancipationist vision of national history”.<sup>37</sup> In 1943, Wright’s efforts in organizing a “National Freedom Day” resulted in a letter of congratulations from then president of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who stated that “the steady progress of our Negro citizens in that time emphasizes what can be accomplished by free people in a free country”.<sup>38</sup> Similar to Emancipation Day and ‘National Freedom Day’, the black fair celebrated black progress and uplift, albeit in a less overtly political way. The fair, however, contained exhibits and messages of black agency within economic, political and educational sectors and in fact public deference helped subvert white animosity towards these messages and images of advancement. As a result, black organisers and exhibitors were able to push boundaries and messages further than if they had agitated or openly promoted black economic and social agendas.

Although Macon had a specifically black community area, a district called “Pleasant Hill”, the black fair was held in Central City Park, which was predominantly used by the white community. Many whites would have been unwilling to attend the fair if it had been based within a predominantly black community, again illustrating that black organisers sought to court a white audience. According to the 1909 minutes of the Macon City Council, both the white and the black fair were granted equal access to Central City Park. Both sets of organisers went through the same process: notably, both applications had similar clauses and were processed in a similar amount of time.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Clark, *Defining Moments*, 224.

<sup>38</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt to Major Wright, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1943, in Lemon (ed.), *Radio Speeches of Major R. R. Wright*, 98-99.

<sup>39</sup> Petitions appear frequently within City Council minutes. An example illustrating when both the black and white fair associations applied on the same day can be seen in Macon City Council minutes, Macon, Feb 16<sup>th</sup>, 1909, 135, Washington Memorial Library, Macon, Georgia.

Despite this, black applicants would not have been automatically granted equal consideration. The debate surrounding the 1906 fair had demonstrated that, if it contained radical elements that conflicted with a white supremacist agenda, then white councillors could stop it from continuing. This dependence on white authorities highlights the dynamic that existed between the black and white community and the seesawing between approval and disapproval that characterised black existence.

The 1896 *Plessy vs. Ferguson* ruling limited black involvement in any white areas. Judge W. R. Hammond of Georgia claimed that the black fair was evidence of the “natural order of things. He is at home there and does not feel at home when he tried to butt into the white man’s affairs”.<sup>40</sup> Conversely the black fair was also an example of how segregation allowed African Americans to create spaces and institutions of their own. In 1908, Wright mentioned in a speech at Augusta’s black fair that his initial desire had been to achieve “a cooperation in which only colored people could own stock”, as opposed to Augusta’s fair in which both whites and blacks were able to own stock.<sup>41</sup> Wright’s original plan to have a solely black institution is significant in terms of claiming African American space and agency. In her study of Wright, June Odessa Patton states that he “encouraged the establishment of black institutions, not as a means of accommodating to a segregated society, but as a way of strengthening black culture; and had the South been integrated, Wright would have insisted upon some separate

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<sup>40</sup> General Deficiency Bill, Hearings conducted by the subcommittee Messrs J. J. Fitzgerald (chairman), Charles L. Bartlett, Thomas U. Sisson, Joseph G. Cannon, and Frederick H. Gillett of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives in charge of Deficiencies for the Fiscal year 1912 and prior years. Statement of Judge W. R. Hammond, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1912, 6. Courtesy of Renna Tuten at the University of Georgia, Athens.

<sup>41</sup> *Augusta Chronicle*, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1908.

institutions”.<sup>42</sup> Wright’s desire for cultural pluralism was, therefore, achieved in part through Macon’s black fair, showing that it came about not just out of necessity, but also through a desire to preserve the black community or communal identity. As the *Atlanta Independent* stated, the event was “purely Negro, organized and developed and promoted by Negro talent”.<sup>43</sup>

The *Plessy* ruling had legally determined that provision of racial spaces could be separate and equal, though in actuality black spaces were often inferior to white spaces. The separate facilities of the black fair allowed black members of the community, to some extent, to circumvent the limited and inferior social spaces offered to blacks by white society. Segregation at the fair was controlled and maintained by the fair’s black organisers and was not based on black inequalities. Consequently, the fair hinted at the racial equality and separate space afforded through black institutions. For example, at Augusta’s 1908 black fair, the seating arrangements at the football match were described thus: “one side of the box seats, beginning at the judges’ stand [will be] reserved for whites and the other side for colored. Both will be charged at the same rate for these seats”.<sup>44</sup> There is no evidence that the facilities differed in any way and, as both races were being charged equal rates, it suggests that a degree of racial equality was achieved and evidenced within aspects of the fair.

Blacks’ control of their own fair, albeit with white involvement, was no minor victory given that Macon’s parks and recreational space were subject to white authority. An

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<sup>42</sup> Patton, “Major Richard Robert Wright, Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia, 1880-1920”, 438.

<sup>43</sup> *Atlanta Independent*, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>44</sup> *Augusta Chronicle*, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1908.

unsanctioned black presence on Macon's public streets or parks was often met with white violence. Indeed, just before the turn of the century, a public park outside of Macon had a sign reading "No Dogs and Niggers allowed", which had led to conflict when black soldiers, returning from the Spanish-American war in 1898, tore it down in an act of rebellion.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, parades of African American progress and achievement following Emancipation were often met with hostility. In 1906, during New Year celebrations, whites challenged the "fundamental right" of black marchers to occupy the streets of downtown Savannah. When one white resident attempted to cross the procession line, his action caused a fight.<sup>46</sup> There is no evidence, however, of any aggression resulting from the displays held in connection with the Macon and Augusta black fairs. The use of Washingtonian accommodationist rhetoric, which set the tone for the black fair and its parades, outwardly legitimised this occupation of space because it created a veneer of control for the white community, who were seen to allow such displays. Accommodationism meant that the black presence on Macon's main streets, designated as white space, negated any anxieties about an unsanctioned, large crowd of African Americans that whites might have and the fair and its parades were reported on positively by Macon's white newspapers. For example, in 1913, the *Macon News* stated it was one of "the largest and best parades in the history of the negro state fair" and, in 1916, the *Macon Telegraph* detailed the "handsomely decorated vehicles" in the black fair's parade.<sup>47</sup> The strategy of accommodationism thus provided an invaluable way forward for black fair participants during an era in which forms of black cultural expression were otherwise limited.

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<sup>45</sup> Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 467.

<sup>46</sup> Clark, *Defining Moments*, 204.

<sup>47</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1913; *Macon News*, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1916.

Regardless of white interpretation of the fair's parades, black claims on public space were significant as African Americans dominated the streets of Macon and Augusta during the parades. Richard King has argued in his study of the civil rights movement that there was an immense psychological benefit to be gained from collective gatherings.<sup>48</sup> Such rallies operated on multiple cultural and racial levels within the white dominated terrain of the South as the parades were a discernible incursion into white spaces. Indeed, the parades created a way in which the black community could assert a visible, collective body. The *Macon Telegraph* estimated that, within the body of the procession, there were more than fifty floats and a "long procession in which the carpenters, brick masons, blacksmiths, painters, tailors, farmers and others" would all play an important part.<sup>49</sup> The display drew together members from different occupational sectors of black society and demonstrated their eagerness to be included within the venture. For example, some farmers must have travelled from outlying rural areas in order to participate.

The floats and the noise created by a crowd meant that the parade had a powerful visual and aural impact. The pageant was accompanied by black bands and musicians, including the "bugle drum corps". Additionally, there was the official band of the black state fair and a minstrel troupe, which performed at the fairgrounds.<sup>50</sup> In 1916, there were also marching brass bands, while the glee club, a group of singers who performed short choral pieces, were also doing their "utmost to entertain the vast throng that

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<sup>48</sup> Richard King in Grant, *The Way It Was In The South: The Black Experience in the South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 82.

<sup>49</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1913.

<sup>50</sup> *Macon News*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1913.

[lined] up the streets”.<sup>51</sup> Crowds of people filled the streets of Macon to watch. In 1908, for example, the *Atlanta Constitution* estimated that “there must have been 20,000 to 25,000 [people] to view the floats”.<sup>52</sup> Six years later, the *Macon News* estimated that the parade was again witnessed by at least 20,000 people.<sup>53</sup> The occupation of the roads and sidewalks meant the parade dominated the streets of Macon. In 1913, the event was considered important enough to record, as moving pictures were taken of the procession and replayed to a wider audience.<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, no copy of the film seems to have survived, which makes it difficult to determine the demographics of the crowd, although the vast numbers imply that the audience consisted of both whites and blacks.

A similar spectacle took place during the yearly Emancipation Day celebrations. Augusta’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Emancipation Parade, held during 1912, shared features with the black state fair including “a division of fifty men on horseback, floats and several carriages containing African American ministers and educators from the city and a local band which brought up the rear of the parade”.<sup>55</sup> Writing for the *Augusta Chronicle*, Silas X. Floyd, secretary of Augusta’s Black Fair Association, described the cavalcade as including representatives from local black institutions, such as Haines School and Paine College, which also exhibited at Macon and Augusta’s black state fairs.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Macon News*, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1916.

<sup>52</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1908.

<sup>53</sup> *Macon News*, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1914.

<sup>54</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1913.

<sup>55</sup> Clark, *Defining Moments*, 221.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*



Projections of black historical, economic and social progress formed a significant link between all three parades. The one at Macon was organised in conjunction with the black fair and, by extension, reflected the ethos promulgated by organisers within the fairgrounds. It too sought to celebrate black progress, industry and middle-class respectability. Kathleen Clark argues that Emancipation processions represented the “determined efforts of African Americans to celebrate freedom and chart a course for interracial progress”.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, floats at Macon’s black fair were reported to represent the “progress of the negro race during the past fifty years of freedom, in agriculture, and industrial arts”.<sup>58</sup> Displays of an upwardly mobile black community created a positive and important sight for many African American observers and, as the line made its way through various areas and streets, even passers-by who did not attend the fair would have witnessed these images of black advancement.

In 1907, Macon’s black fair parade route started on New Street, at the black Pythian Temple, and terminated at Central City Park.<sup>59</sup> From New Street, the cavalcade turned left onto Plum Street, passing the First Baptist “colored” church, which was on the corner.<sup>60</sup> However, the fair moved away from this specifically black area and followed the length of Plum and then onto Broadway or Fourth Street. Broadway was a prominent street for black and white businesses and the details of numerous routes show

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1913.

<sup>59</sup> 1939 Travel map of Macon, Georgia, “Sights to See and Things to do in Macon” as prepared for the Chamber of Commerce, Middle Georgia Archives, Macon, Georgia. Route information in *Macon News*, October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1907.

<sup>60</sup> *Macon City Guide 1906* (Macon, Georgia: R. L. Polk & Co., 1906), 18.

that many of the fair parades went through this main street.<sup>61</sup> By choosing this course, black participants gained a visible presence in the industrial, financial, and white-collar areas of downtown Macon. Between block numbers 600 to 400 of Broadway, the procession went past white-owned businesses and public buildings. The 1909 business directory showed that number 505 was the Georgia Produce Company; 470, the Central City Ice Company; 474-476, the Coca Cola Bottle Company; 419, Macon's Chamber of Commerce and 403, the company agent of the Central of Georgia Railway.<sup>62</sup> All of these were prominent white-owned industries or businesses and were included in a 1906 Chamber of Commerce publication, which listed Macon's leading resources.<sup>63</sup> In fact, the area was symbolic of Macon's increasing industrial and agricultural growth during the early twentieth century. The parade and fair emphasised that black labour was pivotal to this development. However, by going through areas, which were devoted to white industrial growth, the procession also promoted black vocational trades and labour as a pathway to civic inclusion.<sup>64</sup>

In 1907, the parade continued to turn off Broadway at the start of the 400 block, thereby avoiding Broadway's 300 block, a sector marked in the city directory with an asterisk which denoted that it was a "colored" area.

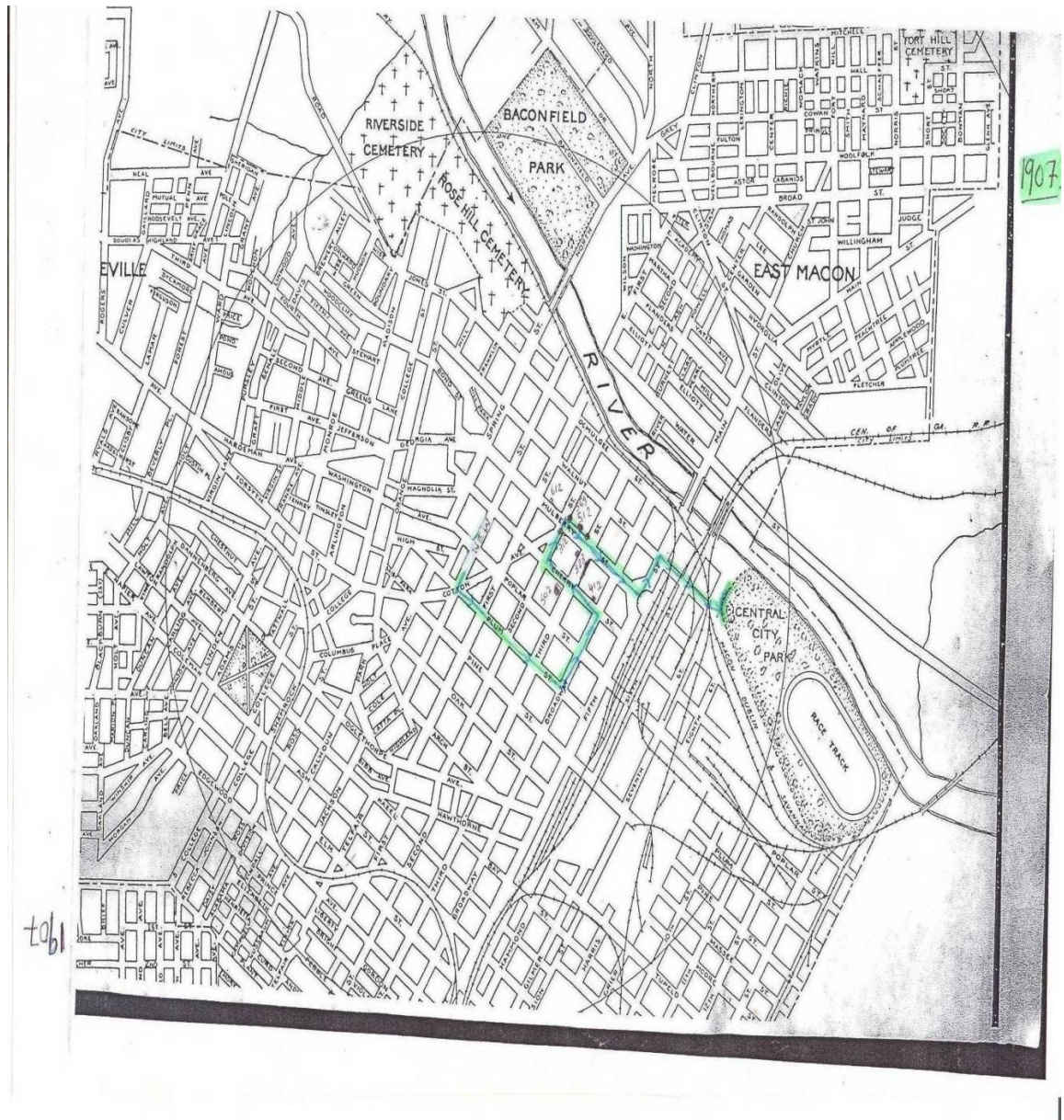
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<sup>61</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1911; *Macon Telegraph*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1913; *Macon News*, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1916.

<sup>62</sup>*Macon City Guide 1909* (Macon, Georgia: R. L. Polk & Co., 1909), 69.

<sup>63</sup> Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce, "City of Macon, Georgia & Vicinity and their Resources", *Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce Publication*, 1906, Washington Memorial Library, Macon, Georgia.

<sup>64</sup> Black industrial labour is discussed in Chapter Two, pp. 102-104.



3. The 1907 parade route through Macon's downtown, started on New Street and terminated at Central City Park.<sup>65</sup>

By going down Cherry Street instead, the line led directly into the heart of Macon's white business district. On Cherry Street, it passed the Exchange Bank of Macon and the *Macon News* building. By zigzagging down Second Street and then Mulberry Street,

<sup>65</sup> 1939 Travel map of Macon Georgia, "Sights to See and Things to do in Macon" as prepared for the Chamber of Commerce, Washington Memorial Library, Macon, Georgia. Route information in *Macon News*, October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1907.

the procession also passed another white newspaper, the *Bibb County Official Record* and Bibb County Court House, Macon Savings Bank, the offices of the *Macon Telegraph* and the Exchange Bank building.

Going past all three of Macon's white newspaper offices created maximum publicity for the fair. Both the *Telegraph* and *News* reported on the fair's route, but there are no available records from the *Bibb County Record*. The chosen route indicated a deliberate intent on the part of the organisers to create a visible black presence within the heart of Macon, especially as the parade took place on a Friday morning, which meant that many white office workers would have seen them. This black encroachment into white downtown Macon served a dual function: it was a visual testimony to the orderly conduct of the black community involved in the fair and a visual reminder that black labour helped power and maintain these industrial sectors.

Black infringement and blurring of Jim Crow regulations were also highlighted during a procession at Augusta's Black State Fair in 1915. Descriptions of the spectacle shows it travelled from outside the city's Confederate Monument, from Ninth to Broad Street and Broad Street to Thirtieth. Broad Street was, and still is, Augusta's main street, showing that the parade clearly went through designated white areas, creating visibility for the black community. From Thirtieth, participants caught a trolley bus to the fair grounds.<sup>66</sup> It was significant that the black community caught a trolley to the fair, as Augusta's trolleys had been segregated since 1900, thus raising questions as to how possible it would have been to achieve segregation effectively with a large crowd of

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<sup>66</sup>*Augusta Chronicle*, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1915.

black fairgoers. Segregation on Augusta's streetcars had a volatile and violent history.<sup>67</sup> When the city first passed the ordinance, a prominent white man was shot and his African American assailant was subsequently lynched by an enraged white mob. In this tense racial climate, the black community chose to boycott Augusta's streetcars in order to protest practices of segregation.<sup>68</sup> Despite some initial success, however, blacks were eventually forced to use Augusta's segregated facilities, due to a lack of alternative forms of mass transport.<sup>69</sup>

Considering earlier efforts by Augusta's African Americans to boycott streetcars, it is interesting that fifteen years later they would deliberately choose to use them as transport. Despite the lack of alternative transportation, organisers must have deliberately chosen this route, as opposed to keeping it closer to the fairgrounds, so that spectators would need to get streetcars. Dittmer stresses that street trolleys continued to be a locus for racial conflict, which normally involved a degree of humiliation for and violence against black passengers.<sup>70</sup> A collective black body, which dominated Augusta's streetcars, would have been physically imposing for any white passengers on board; a group of black passengers was a far less easy target for white insults or violence than a lone black passenger. If this group of black trolley riders had been trying to make a political point, it would have created considerable racial tension. The black presence was, however, condoned due to the recreational nature of the parade. This physical and visual infringement of the street trolleys, therefore, passed without any

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<sup>67</sup> John Dittmer, *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 16.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

evidence of retaliation from Augusta's white community. Recreational events, such as the fair, consequently allowed African Americans to exert a communal presence within segregated environments and subtly challenge the boundaries of Jim Crow restrictions.

Unlike Macon's 1907 parade, the routes taken in 1911 and 1913 both went through Broadway's black business district.<sup>71</sup> This particular course went past black homes and institutions significant to the black community. For example, the procession passed the home of M. C. Jackson, the owner of a black cafe, who had a float in the parade and resided in Broadway.<sup>72</sup> More significantly, the parade went past the Douglass Theatre, which was located at 363 Broadway.<sup>73</sup> The owner of the Douglass Theatre, Charles Douglass, was actively involved in the running of the state fair and the theatre was a crucial part of black life in Macon, described in an interview by resident Mamie Wesley as "one of the most important places we went".<sup>74</sup>

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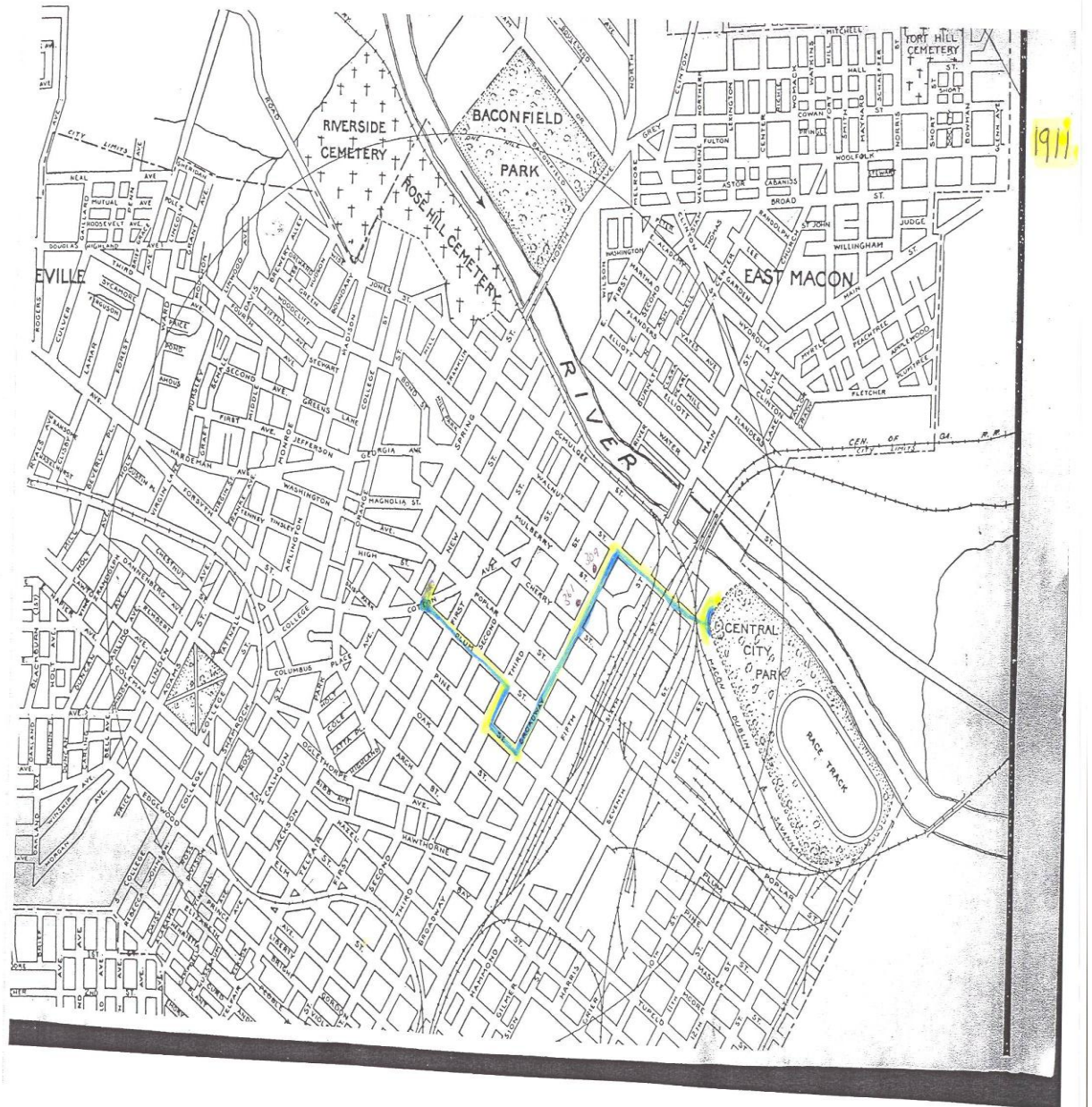
<sup>71</sup> In 1907 and 1916 the parades both avoided the 300 block of Broadway.

<sup>72</sup> *Macon City Guide 1909*, 69.

<sup>73</sup> *Macon News*, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1914. From 1912, the Douglass Theatre was located at 363 Broadway and in 1917 it was moved to 1223 Broadway.

<sup>74</sup> Interview conducted by students of the middle Georgia area with Mamie Wesley, Delores Cook (ed.), "We too built America" in *Recovering the American Heritage of Three Ethnic/Minority Groups in the Middle Georgia Area*, Ethnic Heritage Project, Bibb County Public Schools and Booker T. Washington Community Center, Macon, Georgia, 1984-1985, 203.

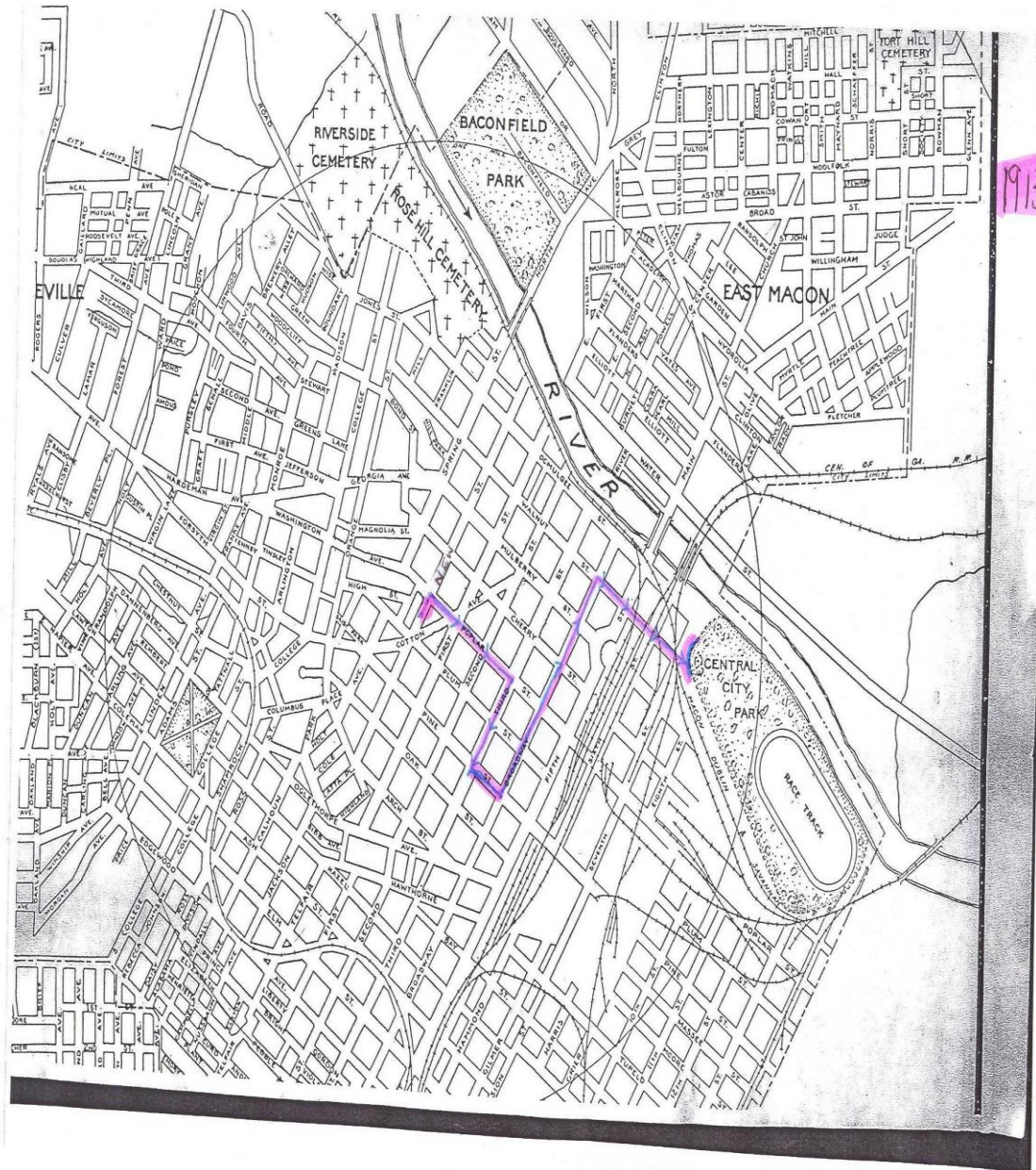




4. The 1911 parade route.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>75</sup>Macon Telegraph, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1911.





5. The 1913 parade route<sup>76</sup>

Broadway was the most central black area in Macon although many African American churches, institutions and residences were located in areas outside of Broadway. In fact, the majority of black Maconites resided in East Macon, Tybee, and Pleasant Hill. During the early 1900s, when they needed to buy groceries, they went to Bevis McElroy

<sup>76</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1913.



Grocers on Fort Street Hill or Burdell & Logan Grocers on Cotton Avenue.<sup>77</sup> Cotton Avenue itself contained many black-owned businesses, including Kyle's Drug Store, Miles Cafe, black insurance offices, black churches, and the Knights of Pythias headquarters.<sup>78</sup> The black state fair always started their parades at the Knights of Pythias headquarters. However, the routes did not go down Cotton Avenue, even though it provided a direct path to Walnut Street, which would have then led to the fairground. This suggests a deliberate attempt by organisers to draw attention to, and position the parade within, particular areas of Macon's downtown. The route took black members of the community outside the places in which they traded and resided on a daily basis. It provided the opportunity for organisers to insert themselves within areas, which were situated outside of the normal geographical pockets of black life.

### *Promoting Black Businesses and Wealth*

The black sector of Broadway was an area historically associated with the efforts and success of black entrepreneurs. Going past the 300 blocks of Broadway meant walking past symbols and embodiments of black economic success, reinforcing messages contained within the fair. This sector was located in the downtown area of Macon, which meant it was flanked by white residential and business districts, thus making symbols of black entrepreneurial spirit more significant due to their survival against dominant white counterparts. Black business owners had often resided in this section on Broadway; indeed, one Solomon Humphries, cotton dealer and owner of a general store,

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<sup>77</sup> Tubman African American Museum, *Macon's Black Heritage: The Untold Story* (Macon, Georgia: The Tubman African American Museum, 1997), 41.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

bought property there and, in 1830, owned a grand home on Oglethorpe near Broadway, which, at that time, was valued at more than \$8,000.<sup>79</sup> In the early twentieth century, Charles Douglass also owned property on Broadway and his flats were leased out for \$140 per month. Subsequent tax records indicate that Douglass' income climbed from \$2,400 in 1905 to \$42,000 in 1915.<sup>80</sup> The rise in Douglass' income demonstrates his expanding businesses, which created a powerful symbol of black economic wealth in this location, during the period in which the fair parades occurred.

The accommodationism espoused at the fair effectively defended the status quo in Macon, which guaranteed the continued prosperity of black businesses and the fair highlighted the economic advantages of separate black institutions. Fon Louise Gordon states that the colour line "provided the black middle class with a closed group economy, which meant that they came to have a vested interest in segregation".<sup>81</sup> During an interview conducted by the Ethnic Heritage Project in 1984-85, Willie Sheftall, a 75-year-old black resident of Macon, also revealed that, "strange as it may seem, Macon had more black businesses in the early period than we have right now. I recall drug stores, exclusive restaurants, black-owned theatres. Since there was such a keen line of segregation, blacks had more businesses. Those were the only places blacks could go".<sup>82</sup> Many black community members were engaged by white employers and their money was derived from the white community. Black institutions, whilst deemed

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>81</sup> Fon Louise Gordon, *Class and Caste: The Black Experience in Arkansas 1880-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 5.

<sup>82</sup> Cook (ed.), "We too built America", Interviews conducted by students of the Middle Georgia area with Willis Sheftall, 186.

necessary through segregation, meant that the money earned by black patrons was spent in black-owned businesses, which ultimately benefited the black business community.

This economic model also worked in relation to the proceedings of the black fair, which was also an example of a closed economic opportunity for the African American community. Whilst there was a designated black day at Georgia's white state fair, such days were sporadic, denying many African Americans the opportunity to visit the white state fair. Consequently, limited recreational spaces and scarce opportunities to visit fairs or carnivals meant that black patrons were more likely to attend when such events did occur. Such limited competition benefited the black fair organisers as it meant black patrons did not spend their money at the white event. Segregation taboos ensured that the black fair contained black-run restaurateurs, food stalls and drink stands, amongst others. The price of admission, normally around 25 cents for adults and 15 cents for children, would have likewise gone directly towards the running and maintenance of the fair.<sup>83</sup>

The establishment of separate state fairs had also allowed the black community to create and expand a recreational business. The Georgia State Colored Agricultural and Industrial Association constituted a "legally organised body" in which blacks participated collectively and for which they were urged to buy stocks and shares.<sup>84</sup> In 1907, the *Savannah Tribune* stated that Macon's Negro Fair Association had made a profit of \$3,668.12 in its first year, whilst the total assets of the company itself stood at \$4,237.12, illustrating the financial success of the venture, which would, in turn, reward

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<sup>83</sup> *Macon News*, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1916.

<sup>84</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1908.

its shareholders.<sup>85</sup> The financial success of the Augusta fair was proved when, in 1911, its parent white Georgia-Carolina fair association got into financial difficulties. Subsequently, the officers of Augusta's Negro Fair Association put down "\$35 in making up the Georgia-Carolina fair deficit, saying they desired in this way to show their appreciation of the courtesies and help extended to them by the officers of the Georgia-Carolina Fair Association and the white people of Augusta generally".<sup>86</sup> This sense of a paternalistic role reversal points to the independence and financial power granted through the black fair association, allowing them to succeed independently in a year in which its white counterpart had failed. The success of the black fair is indicative that the business and financial acumen of its organisers may have been superior.

The black fair was important as a business as it provided temporary and long-term employment for African Americans. The *Savannah Tribune* stated that there were more than ninety people on the payrolls of Macon's Black Fair Association who, the *Savannah Tribune* claimed, were "given better salaries and wages than they received at their regular employment".<sup>87</sup> For many African Americans, their "regular" employment meant working under white management and average black wages varied depending on jobs and in 1916, depending on board, Georgia's farm labourers earned from 40 cents to 75 cents a day with a \$1.00 being the maximum, while the average weekly wage of black cooks and maids in Athens, Georgia, in 1912, was \$2.72 and \$2.34 respectively.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1907.

<sup>86</sup> *Augusta Chronicle*, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>87</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>88</sup> Lorenzo J. Greene and Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro Wage Earner* (Rockville, Maryland: Wildside Press LLC, 2008), 208; Dittmer, *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era*, 28.

Under Wright, employees' wages ranged from \$1.00 to \$5.00 per day.<sup>89</sup> For example, Wright hired two women, one as a stenographer and one as a typist, to do work for the Black State Fair Association and paid them, one \$45.00 per month and the other \$30.00 per month.<sup>90</sup> The economic benefits gained by working for a black employer provided an insight into the greater equality promoted by black-run institutions. It is also possible that Wright was trying to draw attention to the inequality of Georgia's wages compared to industrial sectors of the country who offered African American workers the opportunity to earn between \$2.50 and \$3.75 a day.<sup>91</sup>

The wages paid by the Black Fair Association had wider implications for the local black community in terms of business and industrial wealth, as the *Atlanta Independent* argued, "A pay roll carrying 80 persons tells in any community and contributes largely to aggregate wealth and opportunity of any people." According to the newspaper, the employment opportunities that the fair presented alone made the event a worthwhile venture as "if the fair did no more than to furnish these hundreds each year work [sic]...from one to six months, it will have filled a place worthy of consideration in the industrial equation in the South".<sup>92</sup>

Strong black establishments provided separate facilities for black customers to relax away from the white community. Although born out of necessity, such facilities ultimately helped African Americans to travel and network across states with greater ease. The lack of available segregated facilities caused considerable problems for

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<sup>89</sup>*Atlanta Independent*, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1910.

<sup>90</sup>*Savannah Tribune*, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1907.

<sup>91</sup> Greene and Woodson, *The Negro Wage Earner*, 208.

<sup>92</sup>*Atlanta Independent*, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1910.

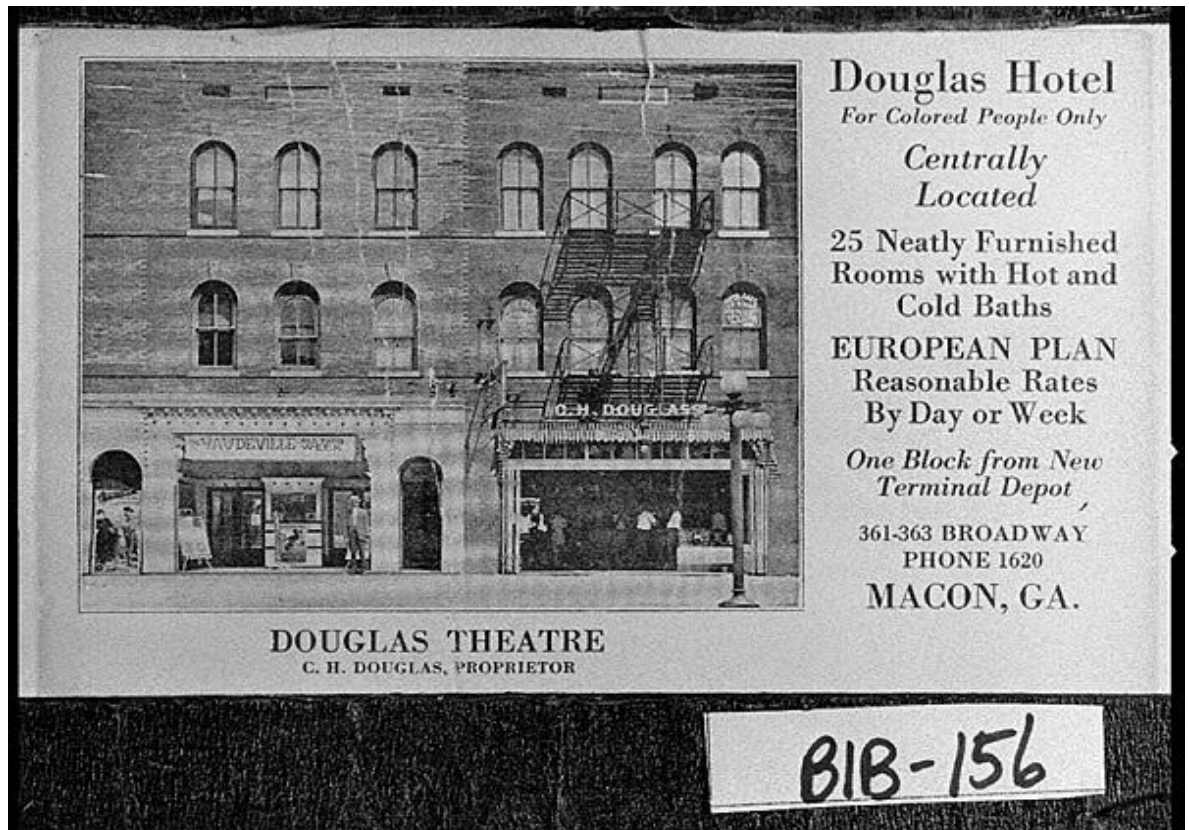
travelling black performers and visitors during this period. Indeed, accommodation had already proved a problem at the 1915 Richmond Negro Exposition as there was only one “colored hotel” of any size, which, combined with a few boarding houses, “could not accommodate 150 negroes.” As a result, many black Virginians did not see the exposition at all.<sup>93</sup> African Americans within the entertainment and sports industry similarly testified to the difficulty they encountered when visiting southern towns. Speaking about the experiences of a black Atlanta baseball team who toured the South during the late 1930s, Billie Harden stated that: “In those days, the hotels owned and operated by Negroes were few”.<sup>94</sup> One of Macon’s local businessmen, Charles Douglass, who was involved with the fair, owned businesses, which helped accommodate many black visitors who came to Macon for the fair. Douglass established the Colonial Hotel prior to 1909 (later referred to as the Douglass Hotel), which he described as a “three story pressed brick building right in the heart of the business district on Broadway... and today it is the only piece of property owned by a Negro on that street”.<sup>95</sup> Black visitors to Macon’s fairground could walk from the terminal to the hotel and stay there during the ten-day period, allowing them to visit the exhibitions.

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<sup>93</sup> Mitch Alan Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom: Memory and Meaning in African American Emancipation Celebrations, 1808-1915* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 251.

<sup>94</sup> Clifford Kuhn et al., *Living Atlanta: An Oral History of the City 1914-1948* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 270.

<sup>95</sup> Charles Douglass, “Managing a Negro Theatre” in the report of the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Negro Business League (Annual Conference Proceedings) 1915, Records of the National Negro Business League, p. 185, Charles Douglass Business Records, Washington Memorial Library.



6. Photograph of the Douglass Theatre and Hotel taken in Macon during the early 1900s. (As seen by the actual picture of the theatre the advert has spelt Douglass' name wrong)<sup>96</sup>

Eating establishments were also segregated for black visitors. In their tour of the South, Harden stated that the baseball team often could not find a place to eat in which they would actually want to dine.<sup>97</sup> In Macon, Douglass' businesses also addressed the problem of finding black restaurants outside the fairgrounds. As an additional part of his Complex on Broadway, he owned the Douglass Grill, which included a Soda Fountain and Café, thus providing eating facilities in which black Maconites and visitors to the fair could, again, circumvent some of the problems experienced by Billie Harden.

<sup>96</sup> Photograph of Douglass Theatre and Hotel as found on *Vanishing Georgia*, Division of Archives and History, Digital Library of Georgia, <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/douglass/history.php> (accessed 03.07.10).

<sup>97</sup> Kuhn, *Living Atlanta*, 270.

Days such as “Business Men’s Day” testified to, and commended, the efforts of the African American community in creating their own economic base and improving the race.<sup>98</sup> “Business Men’s Day” consolidated a sense of racial uplift, which, through its very name, pushed beyond the limits of a future envisaged by whites.<sup>99</sup> The *Savannah Tribune* urged “negro business and professional men [to] send something to show people what they are doing; in a word let the best of everything that reflects [sic] credit upon the race be in evidence at the first colored fair to be held in the state of Georgia.”<sup>100</sup>

The black state fair’s parade similarly promoted the burgeoning black businesses that existed in Macon, evidencing the black community’s economic progress. Floats in the parade included East Side Shoe Shop; Ed Reddings, Fish and Oyster Dealer, 1126 Broadway; C. M Jones, tailor, 809 ½ Broadway; M. C Jackson’s Cafe, 321 Broadway; Douglass Theatre; the North Carolina Mutual Insurance and Atlanta Mutual Insurance Company. These displays perpetuated what Susan Davis has termed “the invention of commodified recreation”.<sup>101</sup> Recreational spheres, such as parades, provided a place in which to reach, and advertise to, a large black crowd and the advertisement of black businesses displayed clear consumer and economic interests. They also provided a space in which black businesses could offer financial sponsorship for the event. The parade

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<sup>98</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1916.

<sup>99</sup> White visions and interpretations of black industrial roles are discussed at length in Chapter Two, pp. 102-104.

<sup>100</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>101</sup> Susan G. Davis, *Power and Parades: Street Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 17.



highlighted increased participation of black businesses within public commercial spheres, spheres not necessarily devoted or confined to white needs.

During an age of segregation, such advertising opportunities would have been rare. There were obviously African Americans newspapers in which black businesses could advertise; however, illiteracy rates and limited access to such resources meant that adverts would not have been seen by certain sectors of the black community. The fair was an opportunity to advertise on a larger scale than such publications offered as there were few times that African Americans from across the state would have congregated together in a southern city's downtown area. Businesses such as Jackson's cafe could advertise to black visitors and residents to come and eat and drink at the locale. In addition to promotional sponsorship, which advertised the business, it showed them to be giving back to the black community through the fair. Advertising projected a sense of economic strength and continuity as it demonstrated that the business was sufficiently established to publicise itself through a float, enhancing its credibility within the community. Such advertising was also significant in a broader context because many black businesses were "typically undercapitalized and therefore especially vulnerable to the devastating shocks which periodically hit the American economy".<sup>102</sup> White businesses could, if they chose, sell to both races, whereas black stores were largely confined to a black customer base. Similarly, due to white control of the financial market, whites were able to sell goods at a cheaper rate and many black businesses were under constant strain to survive. The significance of advertising at the fair meant that black businesses were able to expand their customer base, which, in turn,

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<sup>102</sup> Robert Cook, *Sweet Land of Liberty? The African American Struggle for Civil Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education, 1998), 43.

translated into greater economic stability, helping to strengthen the self-sufficiency of the black community.

One symbol of financial success which appeared frequently at the black fair was the automobile.<sup>103</sup> In 1906, an automobile made by J. H. Williams, an African American from Augusta, was reported to be “attracting the most attention” as it was the “most modern type and was constructed entirely by the exhibitor”.<sup>104</sup> In other years there were specific “negro” automobile meets which included “automobiles owned and driven by men or women” and which were followed by a “Grand Parade”.<sup>105</sup> The automobile meet attracted “widespread attention, not only in this state, but also in adjacent states” with many coming from Alabama, Florida, Tennessee and South Carolina.<sup>106</sup> In the early 1900s, the automobile was a relatively new phenomenon, with its rarity and cost making it a novel consumer item.<sup>107</sup> Consequently, there was considerable racial tension surrounding black ownership of automobiles during this period. In oral accounts, such as Duke University’s *Remembering Jim Crow*, many African Americans testified to the white resentment, and even violence, that often accompanied black ownership of automobiles, illustrating how it was considered to be a white commodity.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1906; *Macon News*, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1909; *Macon News*, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1913; *Macon Telegraph*, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1916.

<sup>104</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>105</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>106</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1911.

<sup>107</sup> Ted Ownby, *American Dreams In Mississippi: Consumer, Poverty and Culture, 1880-1998* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 86.

<sup>108</sup> William Henry Chafe, Raymond Gavins and Robert Korstad, *Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Tell about Life in the Segregated South* (New York: New Press, 2001), 36-38.

Black ownership of automobiles could also lead to animosity between members of the African American community. When Nate Shaw, a reasonably affluent share-cropper in Alabama, purchased a car, he found that some members of the community stopped speaking to him. Shaw stated to his biographer that, “There’s a heap of my race didn’t believe their color should have a car, believed what the white man wanted ‘em to believe”.<sup>109</sup> It is doubtful black animosity was only due to their concurrence with the white community, as ownership of a car was also a “badge of relative prosperity”.<sup>110</sup> For many members of the black community, it was also a reminder that displays of increased affluence and wealth were constricted and confined to an aspiring sector of the black community. During the 1913 fair, there was an exhibit of automobiles owned by “colored doctors” associating professional and economic elevation with the symbol of the car.<sup>111</sup> The appearance of automobiles not only exacerbated the divide between middle and lower-class blacks, but also points to divisions within sectors of the black middle class themselves, as not all of them would have been able to afford automobiles. Paul Gilroy stresses: “Automobility also helps to show up the deepening lines of class division found in dispersed racial communities that are now anything but spontaneously solid, homogeneous, or unified”.<sup>112</sup> Tom McCarthy’s analysis of the automobile culture likewise supports this assertion that “envy, status, and class-based forms of conflict-

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<sup>109</sup> Theodore Rosengarten, *All God’s Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 251.

<sup>110</sup> Paul Gilroy, *Darker than Blue: On the Moral Economies of Black Atlantic Culture*, W. E. B. Du Bois Lectures (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), 23.

<sup>111</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1913.

<sup>112</sup> Gilroy, *Darker than Blue*, 23.

between urban and rural, as well as between rich and poor-were important parts of the decisive impact cars made”, something that also extended to the white community.<sup>113</sup>

Despite perpetuating internal class divisions, the fairs’ meets and parades of automobiles created a powerful display of black wealth and mobility. The appearance of the black-owned automobile also pointed to black participation in a growing consumer market and increased economic weight within that market. That the open display of black automobile owners was tolerated and the factual tone with which it was reported demonstrates how the black fair was able to subvert a degree of white acrimony in these early years. Only a few years later, however, in 1917, white night riders targeted African Americans who owned automobiles.<sup>114</sup> Their attacks correlated with increased post-war demands for black civil recognition and demonstrate that the automobile was not only a symbol of wealth, but also represented a degree of freedom for the black community. Nate Shaw stressed: “I bought the car so they [his two sons] could enjoy life more”.<sup>115</sup> Unlike the segregated and white regulated bus system of the South, automobiles were private spaces. The autonomous space of the car also provided a psychological space in which black drivers regained a sense of control and empowerment. Consequently, cars allowed occupants to enjoy the freedom of speed and space, opportunities which were rare in the Jim Crow South, demonstrating why black ownership of automobiles attracted such white hostility.

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>114</sup> Andrew M. Manis, *Macon: Black and White, An Unutterable Separation in the American Century* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press and Tubman African American Museum, 2004), 54.

<sup>115</sup> Rosengarten, *All God’s Dangers*, 251.

*“Repackaging” the Achievements of the Black Community*

The black fair offered an opportunity to counteract negative black images which were circulated within white society during this period. The white state fair was an example of such images as it often contained representations, exhibits and performers from the black community. In 1902, the *Atlanta Constitution* stated that, during the “old plantation” midway act “fourteen lusty coons will sing and dance, and give a performance that will drive dull care away, and cause trouble to be forgotten forever”.<sup>116</sup> Other entertainment revealed a marked animosity and violence towards the black community, in particular at a midway game called “Hit-the-negro-baby stand”. The *Atlanta Constitution* detailed how Governor Hoke Smith tried his luck at the stand, taking a ball in his hand and “let[ting] fly at about sixteen disenfranchised negro babies”.<sup>117</sup> The article described how the governor aimed “carefully at one” and “cracked the baby right in the face”.<sup>118</sup> This symbolic act of violence revealed much about white power, demonstrating how African Americans were exempt from a sentimentalised childhood. The cruelty towards the black baby doll also conveyed wider fears within the white community regarding African American birth rates and how the black population might exceed those of the white society.<sup>119</sup> On a basic level

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<sup>116</sup>*Atlanta Constitution*, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1902.

<sup>117</sup>*Atlanta Constitution*, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1907.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Fears surrounding reduced white birth rates were also seen during various commentaries at the fair. During the 1907 baby show the *Atlanta Constitution* remarked that over 400 babies demonstrated how the show (and Georgian citizens by association) had “outgrown.... anti race suicide expectations”, *Atlanta Constitution*, October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1907. An analysis of eugenic theory, with particular reference to the black community, is discussed in Chapter Two, p. 87.

it was a visual reminder of the realities of African American life in which public space, access and images were controlled by Macon's white citizens.

With its displays of black affluence and advancement, Georgia's black state fair became an extended public relations exercise, one that repackaged the accomplishments of Georgia's African American population not only to the white community, but also to themselves. The *Charleston Messenger* pointed to the example set by the black state fair and urged Charleston's black businessmen to visit in order to "gain inspiration from the magnificent display of wealth and progress" so they could also hold their own fair the following Autumn.<sup>120</sup> In 1910, Wright said "nothing stimulate[d] within the Negro a desire to do something, to be something, and which would be helpful to himself, his neighbours, and race more than coming together...and exhibiting things which [were] the product of the Negro brain and labor".<sup>121</sup> Robert Rydell views such displays as part of an "exhibition culture" prevalent during the 1920s, noting that exhibits and displays of progress were used by those in power to lend legitimacy to their positions of authority.<sup>122</sup> Despite not holding a dominant position of power within southern society, the black fair granted the black community a greater sense of cultural authority and simultaneously allowed black leaders to assert their influence within a public space.

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<sup>120</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>121</sup> Richard Wright, Sr. in *The Scroll*, March 1910 in Patton, "Major Richard Robert Wright, Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia, 1880-1920", 631.

<sup>122</sup> Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century of Progress Expositions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 6.

The fair created a public impression of black community and culture, which counteracted messages of black inferiority produced by white-dominated society. When talking at the 1911 fair, James Carroll Napier likened the impulse “to the same spirit that actuated white people to hold great expositions”, further stating that if “the American people were proud of what they had to show at the World’s Fair, why should not the negroes of Georgia be proud of what they have to show at Macon?”<sup>123</sup> There were calls for a Semi-Centennial Emancipation Exhibition with “exhibits of work accomplished by the negroes all over the United States [would be] on display showing the progress that has been made by the negro race since emancipation.” The intention was for it to last from four to six months and during that time it was hoped that “hundreds of thousands of negroes from all over the United States, and many white people as well, would come to Macon to attend”.<sup>124</sup> In 1913, Wright successfully secured the passage of an act by the United States Senate “for the appropriation of \$25,000 for the promotion of a Semi-Centennial Emancipation Exhibition”.<sup>125</sup> Wright led the drive for the celebrations and was able to secure not only the support of a large segment of the nation’s black population, but “also the cooperation of W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington”.<sup>126</sup> Macon’s black fair, therefore, linked into wider exhibits demonstrating the progress of the African American community since Emancipation. It also drew together different strands of black leadership.

Macon’s black organisers also applied for, and received, an exhibit from the United States government, which was the “first of its kind ever at a Negro fair,” further

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<sup>123</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>124</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>125</sup> Haynes, *Black Boy of Atlanta*, 119.

<sup>126</sup> Patton, “Major Richard Wright, Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia”, 632.

confirming their sense of legitimacy and recognition on a national and governmental level.<sup>127</sup> The *Telegraph* claimed that “[s]ome idea of its [the exhibition’s] importance” could be gathered from the \$17,000 bond that organisers paid for “its safe and secure return to the government.” The exhibit itself displayed America’s imperial dominance with “guns of all description used by the army, pistols, swords, flags, medals of each president of the United States.” It also demonstrated the work of the United State Revenue Cutters, forerunners of the United States Coast Guard, and the exhibits ranged from depictions of a bear caught in the ice in the Arctic Ocean on a relief expedition to a cutter assisting a vessel in distress. Yet another showed “The Hudson” rescuing the torpedo boat destroyer the “Winslow”.<sup>128</sup>

Sections of the exhibit were directly relevant to the achievements of the black community, in particular the “real money bearing the signatures of four negro registrars of the treasury”.<sup>129</sup> These registrars were Blanche K. Bruce, Judson W. Lyons, William T. Vernon and James Carroll Napier and the *Savannah Tribune*’s anonymous author felt the exhibit was “a step in the right direction of calling the world to the prominent men of the race”.<sup>130</sup> The exhibit also showed “models of Negro patents”.<sup>131</sup> This was in line with Wright’s own interests as he had previously spoken to Bruce, in his capacity as treasurer, and requested him to seek out information on the black inventors.<sup>132</sup> Wright’s inquiry resulted in a twelve-page pamphlet entitled *The*

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<sup>127</sup> *Atlanta Independent*, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1911; *Macon Telegraph*, November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>128</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1912.

<sup>131</sup> *Atlanta Independent*, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>132</sup> Haynes, *Black Boy of Atlanta*, 376.



*Colored Inventor*, written by Henry E. Baker and published by the Crisis Publishing Company.<sup>133</sup> Wright felt that the “Negro as an Inventor” was an important indicator of the race’s “rich mental vigor” and development, and inventions in mechanical arts were “an index to the highest order of genius”.<sup>134</sup>

This sense of officially consolidating the achievements of the black community was also evidenced within the fair as the event provided the chance for the black community to tabulate and present statistical data demonstrating the “progress of the Negro race in this state since Emancipation.”<sup>135</sup> This moved the exercise of the fair firmly away from being a purely recreational endeavour and into serving a sociological function, one that demonstrated black progress through statistics. The findings were compiled by Professor Monroe Work of the GSIC. The connection with a respected educational institution gave them further credibility. These statistics were important as they were published by African Americans about African Americans rather than by white authorities. The findings read the progress of the black race along industrial, ownership, educational, and religious lines. When discussing the findings of Professor Work, Richard Wright Jnr. (Richard Wright Sr.’s son) stated that multiple black schools had been established and similarly the “total value of all property owned by the Negroes in the state amounts to \$28,416,468. There are 4,000 churches with a membership of 520,000 and a property value of \$5,000,000”.<sup>136</sup> All this points to a rise in the number of institutions supporting black progress. Two of the most significant findings relate to

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<sup>133</sup> Haynes, *Black Boy of Atlanta*, 377.

<sup>134</sup> Patton, “Major Richard Wright, Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia”, 171.

<sup>135</sup> *Bulletin of Atlanta University*, 1907, No. 171.

<sup>136</sup> *Bulletin of Atlanta University*, 1907, No. 171.

an increase of more than “400 hundred per cent” in property ownership during the last forty years.<sup>137</sup>

The event of the fair culminated in increased governmental attention towards black southerners and Richard R. Wright was invited to appear before a commission in Washington, D.C., in order to discuss “Labor Conditions in the South”. As a consequence, Wright had an article published in the *Congressional Record* entitled, “The Negro as a Farmer” which, in turn, resulted in more money being allocated for the GSIC.<sup>138</sup> In 1911, James C. Napier, black treasurer of the United States, gave a speech at the fairgrounds.<sup>139</sup> Napier also relayed the statistics citing the increased agricultural and property wealth of the black community, stressing black achievements within an economic framework.

Figures synonymous with black success across the country helped to create displays of national African American achievement within the public arena of the fair. Their presence was important in creating a sense of black culture, as one young black reader wrote into the *Brownies' Book*, “I get so tired of hearing only of white heroes and celebrating holidays in their honor”.<sup>140</sup> The fair commemorated black heroes with the appearance of people, such as Mat Henson, the first African American to reach the North Pole, who symbolised black global accomplishments to the local audience.<sup>141</sup> Recognition of African American history was also emphasised during the fair’s Ex-

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Haynes, *Black Boy of Atlanta*, 373.

<sup>139</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>140</sup> *The Brownies Book*, Vol. 1, No.3 (March 1920),83.

<sup>141</sup> *Macon News*, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

Slave Day in 1911, when ex-president Theodore Roosevelt sent a telegram commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Emancipation.<sup>142</sup> The same year the fair's Hall of Fame commended individual black achievement. There were books, pictures and relics of "prominent negroes in this and other countries and [they were] an interesting feature to those who wish[ed] to make a study of negro achievement".<sup>143</sup> This connection between the exhibitions of black history and the black citizenship became a vital part of the black fair. Wright himself believed that "whether as a pioneer laborer rendering habitable and prosperous our own Georgia, or fighting the battles of the nation, the Negro has by sweat and blood identified himself with every phase and fiber of American history and life".<sup>144</sup>

Chapter Two has discussed the importance of Ex-Slave Day in relation to accommodationism and the power of white nostalgia. The occasion was, however, also significant in terms of asserting black progress and advancement. Louise Newman has argued that, during this period, the actions of black leaders must be understood within the context of wider cultural "hegemonic discourses that characterized the [black] race as both uncivilized and uncivilizable".<sup>145</sup> The fair presented an opportunity to counteract such discourses through a display of the race's achievements for both black and white patrons. Ex-Slave Day framed black success in terms of number of offspring, along with property and livestock. The *Macon Telegraph* detailed the achievements of Robert Carson, an ex-slave, following Emancipation; his achievements were framed in terms of

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<sup>142</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>143</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>144</sup> *Bulletin of Atlanta University*, 1894, No.55.

<sup>145</sup> Louise Newman, "Moving Beyond the Accommodation/Resistance Divide: Race and Gender in the Discourse of Booker T. Washington" in Brundage (ed.), *Booker T. Washington and Black Progress*, 178.

property and propagation as Carson owned “a large amount of livestock and ha[d] twelve grandchildren”.<sup>146</sup> His reproductive success again related to wider fears concerning “race suicide” which played an important role in the dialogues surrounding Ex- Slave day.<sup>147</sup> In 1911, the *Macon Telegraph* declared that the event counteracted notions of the black races dying out.<sup>148</sup> To emphasise these concerns, in 1911, organisers offered prizes to slaves with the “largest numbers of children, grand-children and great-grandchildren”.<sup>149</sup> The appearance of so many slave descendants at the state fair, therefore, refuted “contemporary beliefs that blacks did not possess the wherewithal to survive outside of slavery”.<sup>150</sup> It was evidence of, as Wright had previously stated in 1881, the “development of an irrepressible race, one that cannot be starved out, driven out or killed out”.<sup>151</sup> The *Telegraph*’s assertion that the fair was the “foe” of “race suicide” indicates that the event provided a way through which the African American race could display its physical and social progression.<sup>152</sup> This progress was emphasised through the success of black propagation, which, again, dislocated the middle class from the lower echelons of African American society through their ability to reproduce successfully. It was an image which acutely played into white fears of black reproduction and burgeoning population growth. As discussed

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<sup>146</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>147</sup> Ex-Slave day is discussed in Chapter Two, p.88 and pp. 112-114.

<sup>148</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2004), 82.

<sup>151</sup> Richard R. Wright, “Extracts of Addresses Relating to General Work”, *The American Missionary*, Volume 35 Issue 12 (December 1881), 380.

<sup>152</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

earlier, these fears were displayed at the 1906 white state fair when patrons directed their violence towards black dolls.

Similarly, Ex-Slave Day exposed many of the tensions and contradictions that surrounded white and black interpretations of the fair. For whites, the event embodied a nostalgic recollection of the antebellum South as black participants, such as Carson, formed a tangible link between romanticised memories of slavery and present times. For the black community, Carson occupied a modern, independent position, creating a distinct separation from his previous standing as slave. Such an image subverted the treasured plantation mythology of the South, as Carson's post-Emancipation success rejected the notion that blacks needed a paternalistic white hand to guide them. Instead, emerging black narratives revealed a sense of black agency and a reclaiming of black historical memory and progress. While the white community read the spectacle of Ex-Slave Day as invoking a glorified past, the African American community used the event to demonstrate their racial progress in a spectacle, which informed their collective future.

Organisers were also well aware that some whites believed in, and hoped for, black race suicide, as a depleting black population meant they were an ethnic minority. Richard Wright had himself previously taken umbrage against Senator John Tyler Morgan of Alabama, Senator Marion Butler of South Carolina and Senator Wade Hampton of South Carolina who "would go as far to suggest the extermination of the Negro race so as to preclude any possibility of a dispute to Anglo Saxon supremacy in the South".<sup>153</sup> The health and vitality of the black population was, therefore, important as African

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<sup>153</sup> *Bulletin of Atlanta University*, 1891, No. 24.

Americans created a political and social force, which challenged white dominance. Events at the black fair demonstrated an active effort on behalf of the black community to counteract black decline through health and medical conferences. For instance, in 1909, a Black Health Delegation convened to discuss issues such as tuberculosis and its impact on the black community. It emphasised the efforts of the African American community in advancing practical and scientific ways through which to counteract disease and subsequent death.

### *Furthering Black Community Networks*

The exhibitive space of the fair created visibility around the lives and actions of many middle-class African Americans and pushed the activities of prominent black figures into the public arena. Wright's fellow organisers of Augusta's black fair included Rev. Silas X. Floyd, a prominent African American resident of Augusta and author of an early black textbook for children entitled *Floyd's Flowers or Duty and Beauty for Colored Children* (1905). A 1914 edition celebrating *The History of the American Negro* referred to several of Augusta's fair directors for their association with the venture of the black fair, indicating that the fair itself was viewed as an expression of black achievement. The men involved included Rev. Granville W. Harrison, Rev. Charles Walker, Henry Clay Young, and also Tomas Joseph Linton, who in Sparta "organized and put into operation the Colored Fair Association".<sup>154</sup> In addition, Richard

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<sup>154</sup> Author unknown, *The History of the American Negro, Georgia Edition* (Atlanta, Georgia: A. B Caldwell publishing Co, 1917), preface; Granville W. Harrison, 667; Charles Thomas Walker, 680; Henry Young, 207. For information on Thomas Linton, see *The History of the American Negro*, [http://www.archive.org/stream/historyofamerica01cald/historyofamerica01cald\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/historyofamerica01cald/historyofamerica01cald_djvu.txt), 603 (accessed 03.02.2009).

Wright, Reverend Silas Floyd, Reverend Charles T. Walker and Reverend E. K. Love were all included in a 1962 book, compiled by Cornelius V. Troup, which celebrated *Distinguished Negro Georgians*. Miss Lucy Laney was in charge of the Women's Day programme at Macon's fair in 1906.<sup>155</sup> Laney was originally born in Macon and was principal of the Haines Institute in Augusta. The Lucy Craft Laney Museum of Black History in Augusta and the Lucy Laney High School highlight the celebrity of such local figures within Georgia's black communities, figures who have all been posthumously recognised for their contribution to black education. The involvement of a myriad of figures who shared similar occupations, highlights the existence of a black educational and secular network within Georgia, a middle-class sector which pushed towards a common goal of racial uplift through events such as the fair.

Links and similarities between the black fairs held in Augusta and Macon demonstrate how the fairs helped strengthen a sense of Georgia's black community state-wide during this period. In her biography of organiser Richard Wright Sr., Elizabeth Ross Haynes notes that through an earlier County Fair which he organised in his home city of Cuthbert: "Professor Wright's name and influence as an organizer began to cross county borders".<sup>156</sup> Wright's previous experience shows that he was well aware of the networking possibilities and connections created through such events as "its success and the possibilities of organized farmers attracted his attention to similar possibilities in the teaching profession".<sup>157</sup> Wright's appearances at Macon's and Augusta's black fairs illuminate the geographical, personal and professional ties which existed between some

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<sup>155</sup> Elmore, *Richard R. Wright Sr. at GSIC, 1891-1921*, 40.

<sup>156</sup> Haynes, *Black Boy of Atlanta*, 355.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

of Georgia's leading African American figures during and following the fair. In 1908, Wright gave a speech at the opening of the Augusta black fair and he also had personal connections with its organisers.<sup>158</sup> Wright had previously worked with Augusta resident, Reverend Charles T. Walker and fellow Savannah resident, Emanuel K. Love (of Savannah's First African Baptist Church).<sup>159</sup> Both Walker and Love were later influential within Macon's and Augusta's black fairs. Walker was designated Vice-President of Macon's black fair and was also active in establishing Augusta's black fair in 1908, whereas Emmanuel Love was connected to Macon's Central City College, which regularly exhibited at the fair.<sup>160</sup>

The involvement of so many clergy members with the fair shows how influential churches were in furthering and expanding black educational, social and recreational networks. Many black churches, such as the Tremont Temple Missionary and the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), exhibited there and were involved with the fair's organisation. Indeed, churches were often used as bases for organising the coloured state fair.<sup>161</sup> Reverend E. C. Carter of Atlanta was involved in the 1906 fair acting as the chairman of the Atlanta State Fair Committee. Other figures, such as Bishop Holsey (described as the "father" of education), likewise gave a speech at the

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<sup>158</sup> *Augusta Chronicle*, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1908.

<sup>159</sup> Elmore, *Richard R. Wright Sr. at GSIC, 1891-1921*, 23; Georgia African American Historical Preservation Network, "Reflections: A Program of the Historic Preservation, Georgia Department of Natural Resources," Volume V, No. 3, 2005, [http://gashpo.org/assets/documents/reflections\\_november\\_2005.pdf](http://gashpo.org/assets/documents/reflections_november_2005.pdf) (accessed 18.01.2010).

<sup>160</sup> Elmore, *Richard R. Wright Sr. at GSIC, 1891-1921*, 40; Titus Brown, *Faithful Firm and True: African American Education in the South* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2002), 107.

<sup>161</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1906.



1914 black fair.<sup>162</sup> The contribution of multiple religious figures in the fair illustrates how intertwined secular and educational interests were for black Georgians, similarly stressing the role of the church in furthering black educational endeavours and the black community at large.

The participation of so many educational and religious representatives illustrates how the fair forged a greater awareness and promotion of education for Georgia's black youth. Clark notes how Georgia's educational figures were similarly active in directing black ceremonies on Emancipation Day, as representatives of various schools and colleges crisscrossed the state.<sup>163</sup> "Educational Days" featuring speeches and appearances by local black schools publicly prioritised black education within the fair.<sup>164</sup> In addition, in order to encourage attendance at the fairs in 1906, Augusta and Macon organisers granted holidays or leaves of absence (on salary) to teachers and students "who wish[ed] to attend the Negro state fair".<sup>165</sup> The appearance of various black school bodies at the fair also presented the products of black education and betterment to the community. Amongst the featured schools at the 1910 fair were the Georgia State Normal, The Atlanta University, Spelman Seminary, Central City College and Clark University.<sup>166</sup> By allowing schools to exhibit and participate in competitions, the fair created a sense of community and racial pride in African American youth. It invited participants to show off their exhibits as individual or collective achievements,

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<sup>162</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1914.

<sup>163</sup> Clark, *Defining Moments*, 218.

<sup>164</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>165</sup>*Savannah Tribune*, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1906.

<sup>166</sup>*Atlanta Independent*, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1910.

which was then validated by the list of African American prize winners printed yearly in the white newspaper.

As in other African American communities across the South, black Maconites made considerable efforts to build and sustain educational institutions. Such attempts were not easy as poor facilities, low salaries and the limited financial aid received by black schools meant a constant struggle for these organisations. (All of the above has been well documented along with details of the vehement opposition that many black teachers and schools experienced at the hands of white bigots.)<sup>167</sup> It is difficult to gather statistics concerning black school attendance in Macon and, while school reports and census information provide figures for white schools and colleges, similar statistics are not available for black schools. Census information reveals that in 1930, 91.2 per cent of white children in Macon aged 13-14 attended school, with the number dropping to 75.8 per cent for all 14 and 15 year olds and just 46.7 per cent for 16 and 17 year olds. If we bear this information in mind when we compare white and black illiteracy rates, the percentage of illiterate native-born whites in Macon stood at just 1.2 per cent whereas the percentage of African Americans was 14.7 per cent.<sup>168</sup> These statistics, coupled with limited educational opportunities in the South, means that we can conclude that there were far fewer educated black children in Macon, resulting in high illiteracy rates within the black community.

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<sup>167</sup> For a local account of the struggle in Macon, see Brown, *Faithful, Firm & True*.

<sup>168</sup> U.S. Census Bureau and Population Bulletin, Georgia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 51.

Statistics compiled by Professor Monroe Work, resulting from black fair, however, evidence a more positive slant, demonstrating that illiteracy had reduced from 96 per cent to 12 per cent for those of school age since Emancipation. Richard Wright Jr. stated: "This is extraordinary in view of the fact that less than half of the children of school age are enrolled, and, according to the United States Census, less than eight per cent of the children of Georgia attend school [for] six months".<sup>169</sup> These statistics are difficult to qualify as we are not sure what age was considered "school age" or at what standard the level of literacy was judged, although it is true that a certain sector of black children were more literate than their slave ancestors. The figures help demonstrate the desire of black leaders to prove statistically the progress of African Americans since Emancipation as, by doing so, their educational aspirations and endeavours were shown to be justified. The appearance of multiple black educational institutions, educators and students within a public forum was, therefore, an important display for other African Americans as it demonstrated progress and provided the opportunity to exhibit this progress as a way to inspire others to emulate the example of the elite.

The exhibits of black schoolchildren within the fairgrounds created a powerful symbol of generational progress and education within the black community. The details of black exhibits are not available, but the white state fair included prizes for the best educational exhibit by county/local/city system; individual contests for declamation, best college exhibits showing the best method for training boys/girls and the best industrial contests.<sup>170</sup> It is almost certain that the black fair would have had similar exhibits for

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<sup>169</sup> *Bulletin of Atlanta University*, 1907, No. 171.

<sup>170</sup> Georgia State Fair Association, *Official Premium List for Georgia State Fair, 1912*, Courtesy of the Georgia State Fair Association and the Macon Exchange Club, 35.

their schools, given the similarity of many other events within both fairs. Indeed, the black fair and the white state fair were both considered tools with which to shape and influence Georgia's youth, as evidenced by the mainstream circulation of letters asking if black schools wished to contribute exhibits for the black fair. In one such letter, the State Fair commissioner, W. B. Merritt, stated "there are many reasons why our state should have a creditable exhibit at the Jamestown Exposition. The work of preparing for the exhibit will create interest, enthusiasm and higher educational ideals".<sup>171</sup>

Chapter Two discussed this impetus in relation to white support of industrial education for African Americans and how it was used as a way to limit the economic prospects of the black community. The fair's exhibits of industrial and academic education, in fact, highlighted such education as a method of black advancement. The fair was widely touted as not a money-making scheme but "merely an educational enterprise,"<sup>172</sup> making the event a statement of inspiration to African Americans and a statement of aspiration to whites attending the fair.<sup>173</sup> The emphasis on education at the fair tied into the black organisers', and black leaders', ambitions for the future and the advancement of the black race. Wright later stated: "The future of the country will be what the boys and girls of today are. It is, therefore, the absolute duty of the fathers to determine by

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<sup>171</sup> The Jamestown Exhibition was an exposition held in 1907 in Norfolk, Virginia. It was intended to celebrate the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Virginia Colony. "Circular letters from the Department" from Thirty Fifth Annual Report From the Department of Education to the General Assembly of the State of Georgia for the School Year ending December 31<sup>st</sup> 1906, 35. Washington Memorial Library, Macon, Georgia.

<sup>172</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1912.

<sup>173</sup> As discussed in Chapter Two, whites did not react violently to these displays as accommodationism nullified any overt threats contained in the educational exhibits at the fair, p 53.

the managing of these children what the future of their country shall be”.<sup>174</sup> Even in the years after the venture of the black fair, Wright urged black citizens to “educate, educate! train! train!” connecting this impetus with the need for national funds and recognition: “Hence, it is necessary for a government to spend largely for education of its citizens”.<sup>175</sup>

African American education was clearly important not only for expanding intellectual and occupational horizons in the future, but also in relation to the practical elements of black life. While the promotion of academic education contrasted with white expectations for an African American future, it also demonstrated black resistance to these white-imposed limitations. Literacy was “vital to the task of acquiring land, both in marshalling the necessary resources and in defending against the fraudulent practises of employers and creditors”.<sup>176</sup> Teaching and literacy was integral to furthering black ambition and economic prospects; it was a route through which blacks could avoid being exploited, an occurrence which had robbed many African Americans of land ownership. The fair’s advocacy of schooling for a younger generation, combined with displays of business and agricultural prosperity, illustrated the tangible benefits of educational betterment.

The fair’s organisers handed out educational texts during a sports field day at the fair, thereby forging a link between education and athletics as a means for the black youth

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<sup>174</sup> “Educate, Educate”, Radio Remarks of Major R. R. Wright, Sr., Over Station WIP, November 16th, 1941 in Lemon (ed.), *Radio Speeches of Major R.R. Wright, Sr.*, 37.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>176</sup> Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 459.

development. Du Bois had previously stressed this link between the physical and the cerebral, stating that “athletic sports must in the future play a larger part in the normal and mission schools of the South” as physical skill was as important as intellectual skill.<sup>177</sup> Wright also stressed, in later speeches, that giving “due consideration to both Brains and Brawn, Character and Culture” could alone “aid in a free and happy country”.<sup>178</sup> The *Telegraph* reported that students of Ballard Institute, Green, Pleasant Hill and Hazel Street public schools engaged in “[a]thletic contests, consisting of jumping, running for prizes at the conclusion of which individual hurdle, high jump, broad jump, potato race, and doughnut race will be contested for prizes”.<sup>179</sup> The sporting competition, therefore, linked education and athletics, but also concealed more overt academic aspects contained with the prizes.

During the field day in the 1909 fair, black authored texts were given as prizes: *Lyrics of Lowly Life* by Paul Lawrence Dunbar was presented to the winner of the two hundred yard dash between boys of the fifth and sixth grade, while the winner of the running high jump won Du Bois’ *Souls of Black Folk*. Other prizes included the *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, a set of U.S Histories, the poems of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and *Uncle Remus* by Joel Chandler Harris for the small girls.<sup>180</sup> Works such as Browning’s poetry provided black children with a text, which encouraged intellectual and creative thought. Elizabeth Browning’s poetry advocated a strand of educational thought that veered away from the industrial and practical training advocated by white Southerners. Access

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<sup>177</sup> Du Bois, “The Problem of Amusement”, 235-36.

<sup>178</sup> “Brains and Brawn” by Major R. R. Wright, Sr., April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1943 in Lemon (ed.), *Speeches of R. R. Wright Sr.*, 61.

<sup>179</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>180</sup> *Macon News*, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1909.

to such books and reading resources would have also been limited due to unequal educational facilities imposed upon black citizens. Additionally, as with much of southern society, libraries were segregated.<sup>181</sup> The works of Browning granted black youngsters access to a text which they would have had difficulty obtaining through their schools or local educational facilities. In 1902, Bishop Henry Turner had also stressed that books were the “paraphernalia of civilization” so, by giving them out as prizes, African American organisers again challenged white hegemonic discourses which characterised the black community as uncivilised.<sup>182</sup>

Texts that blended African American social commentary and the history of America likewise demonstrated an underlying impetus to educate black children with an alternative understanding of what it meant to be a black citizen in America. Dunbar and Du Bois shared seminal themes regarding the performance and duality that characterised African American existence. Dunbar had connections with Richard Wright after having visited Atlanta University in 1898 to recite his poem “Life”. In her graduation oration, Wright’s daughter, Julia, spoke about Dunbar’s visit declaring that “everyone in this house at that time must have been convinced that the Negro race ha[d] at last found a man of its own number who [could] express its noblest thoughts in

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<sup>181</sup> A survey conducted on Access to Public Libraries in 1962 found that “library segregation was still rampant in the states of the Deep South.” Louise E. Robbins, *Censorship and the American Library; The American Library Association’s Response to Threats to Intellectual Freedom, 1939-1969* (New York: Greenwood, 1996), 119.

<sup>182</sup> Henry McNeal Turner, “The Afro American Future” [1902] in Edwin S. Redkey (ed.), *Respect Black: The Writings and Speeches of Henry McNeal Turner* (New York: Arno Press Inc. and the New York Times, 1971), 188.

appropriate language”.<sup>183</sup> In his poem, “We Wear the Mask”, Dunbar wrote: “We wear the mask that grins and lies, it hides our cheeks and shades our eyes--this debt we pay to human guile; With torn and bleeding hearts we smile”.<sup>184</sup> The social mask, which upheld the facade of black acquiescence and happiness under white domination whilst also hiding the inner turmoil of black existence, shared thematic similarities to Du Bois’ metaphor of the “Veil”, which he utilised throughout *The Souls of Black Folks*. Du Bois’ metaphor of the veil translated the sense of double consciousness for many African Americans, as they saw images of themselves reflected back through white society creating a “sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity”.<sup>185</sup> On a broader level, this testified to the separation and invisibility of African Americans within American society that had created an overwhelming sense of alienation. The texts of Dunbar and Du Bois, therefore, provided a specifically black commentary on the internal experiences of the African American community. They were not only artistically inspiring, but also instructive as they offered young African Americans ways to interpret their experience. In a society where popular culture was scrutinised and dominated by watchful whites, these writings were subtle lessons, which taught black youth how to deal with life within a white dominated society, helping to cut through the isolation that racism and violence had created.

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<sup>183</sup> *Bulletin of Atlanta University*, 1899, No. 104.

<sup>184</sup> Paul Laurence Dunbar, *Lyric of Lowly Life* (Charleston, South Carolina: Biblio Bazaar, LLC, 2009), 167.

<sup>185</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* [1903] in Judy Boss (ed.), Modified from 1989 Bantam Classic text. Charlottesville: UVA Electronic Text Center, <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/DubSoul.html> (accessed 08.03.11).



### *Conclusion*

The medium of the local fair provided many patrons with a unique experience, one which engaged the African American community with various aspects of society and culture, both on a national and local level. The fair allowed black organisers to push the strategy of accommodationism beyond its envisaged purpose. They used accommodationism to subvert and appease the white gaze, subsequently creating pockets within the event that brought black patrons into contact with symbols, people and exhibits which promoted black social and business achievements. Black institutions expressed a sense of solidarity and self-sufficiency, which could protect the pride of black community members. Similarly strong black networks emerged within the fair and helped extended state and national connections between black communities, which cut through the isolating effects of local racism. The fair, therefore, revises interpretations of accommodationism and presents the strategy as a conduit towards a greater sense of black communal identity and achievement.

The value and rarity of such black recreational spaces as the fairs within the Jim Crow South should not be underestimated. They presented the possibility of empowerment to a section of the community whose subjugation was omnipresent on a daily basis through unequal spaces and messages of inferiority. The sense of celebration perpetuated in the fair consequently denies a straightforward narrative of subjugation via accommodation. It created African American space within a white-dominated community and, in turn, a degree of African American agency. Likewise, elements of citizenship, black community and vitality, hinted at through the fair, served to foster the impetus that went on to drive the civil rights movement. The promise of freedom, respect, dignity, and

economic and social equality actualised through the freedom movement were, in effect, tested out in the strategies of the black state fair.

## Chapter Four

### “The People’s Movement”

#### Agriculture, Economics and Grassroots Politics at the Black Fair

In 1910, the *Atlanta Independent* characterised Georgia’s black fair as a “people’s movement.”<sup>1</sup> The newspaper defined the fair as a place of activism that helped the black community move forward politically and socially. These advances connected the politics of the fair to an emerging black political consciousness. The fair highlighted and fostered black economic self-sufficiency and illustrated the gains made through agriculture and business by the black community. These elements later formed intrinsic parts of two major political movements which emerged during the 1920s: those of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Garveyism, both of which used the idea of economic power as a pathway to political and civic rights.

The exclusion of African Americans from electoral politics necessitated the use of other means to advance their status. While scholars have often pointed to more formal institutions, such as black churches and fraternal organisations, as helping to build the Civil Rights Movement, the fair demonstrates the importance of recreational events and institutions in helping to build communities. Strong black communities helped propel and orchestrate African American political and social movements, which were critical in furthering black interests. This chapter argues that recreational spaces, like the black fair, fostered political ideas and sentiment outside of the traditional nexus of power and,

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<sup>1</sup>*Atlanta Independent*, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1910.

in practical terms, ranked alongside overt political organisations in promoting feelings of black self-worth

*Politics at the Fair*

Following emancipation, African Americans enjoyed a brief period in which they participated within the political mainstream. Freed agricultural workers were politically active and, between the Reconstruction period of 1865 and 1877, tens of thousands of black farmers, sharecroppers and agrarian workers mobilised for political recognition.<sup>2</sup> Omar Ali notes how these political groups originated from fraternal orders, churches and benevolent associations and took organisational form in 1886 with mutual aid societies and labour unions such as Colored Agricultural Wheels, the Colored Farmers' Alliance, the southern branch of the Knights of Labor, and the Cooperative Workers of America.<sup>3</sup> With the end of the Reconstruction period, the Democratic Party took significant steps to reduce black political rights gained after the Civil War, using state legislation and voter registration in order to ensure black disenfranchisement. The decline of black political power ushered in the period that Rayford Logan has described as the "nadir of race relations", during which white supremacy increased and race relations were dictated by Jim Crow regulations.<sup>4</sup> In 1890 black groups started to demand higher wages, debt relief, government ownership and regulation of railroads

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<sup>2</sup> Omar H. Ali, *In the Lion's Mouth: Black Populism in the New South, 1886-1900* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., xiv.

<sup>4</sup> Rayford W. Logan, *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877-1901* (New York: Dial Press, 1954).

and entered the electoral arena, creating a black populist movement.<sup>5</sup> As Ali notes, by 1896 the movement had gone into decline. Networks of fraternal, religious and labour groups helped agitate for black social, political and civil rights during the nineteenth and twentieth century. Significantly, such groups were also involved in the endeavour of the fair. The fair therefore became a political vehicle that advanced an existing movement, as the event brought together powerful institutions which collectively helped further the black cause.

Before he became involved with the endeavour of the fair, Richard R. Wright had been involved in black politics during the presidency of William McKinley (1897 to 1901). He stressed that during this period black men occupied a number of positions such as Register of the Treasury, Collector of Internal Revenue of Georgia and Postmaster in a number of states.<sup>6</sup> In 1898, during the Spanish-American War, Wright himself had occupied the position of paymaster within the United States Army, making him the first African American to serve in such a position. Wright argued forcefully during this period that “aided or unaided, helped or hindered, the negro will have an influence in the government of this country and there is no power in the arm of the American people to keep him down.”<sup>7</sup> Wright’s work from 1900 onwards, however, reflected his disillusionment with the political process and he refused to attend the National Republican Convention in 1900, 1908 and 1916. He later stated that “[m]ost of these [job positions] are now but memories. Colored men do not aspire to these places. They have lost practically all hope of ever again occupying many of the places, which they

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Ross Haynes, *The Black Boy of Atlanta* [1952] (New York: G. K. Hall, 1997), 413.

<sup>7</sup> Richard R. Wright, ‘Extracts of Addresses Relating to General Work’, *The American Missionary*, Volume 35 Issue 12 (Dec 1881), 380.

occupied during the days of McKinley.”<sup>8</sup> Wright’s disillusionment also included black politicians, as he said to his biographer: “I [have] lost all interest in politics during the last few years. Our men became so self-centered and so bent upon office seeking, I felt they had all lost interest in the real welfare of the people.”<sup>9</sup> Wright made his feelings known in the Atlanta University publication, the *Bulletin*, pointing the blame at the white leaders of the Republican Party “who fattened upon the spoils of office and basked in the sunshine of the emoluments of power”. Specifically he named former Governor Rufus Bullock and Senator Joseph E. Brown, both from Georgia, who, during the Constitutional Convention, “formed a majority, and expelled the colored legislators from their halls of legislation”. “If there was mismanagement, who was responsible?” he asked, “[i]f there was fraud and corruption, at whose door should they be laid?”<sup>10</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois shared Wright’s misgivings about the political process and blamed the demise of the Black Populist Party on the “election frauds of the South”.<sup>11</sup>

As black leaders became increasingly disillusioned with the political process, many turned to community institutions, such as the black fair, as an alternative avenue through which to further the political status and needs of the black community. In her study of the black middle class in Arkansas, Fon Louise Gordon states: “while still committed to the attainment of full political and civil rights, [community leaders] had already begun as early as 1880 to shift [their] emphasis from immediate agitation and protest to an emphasis on the responsibilities of the race: self-help, economic

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<sup>8</sup> Haynes, *Black Boy of Atlanta*, 412-413.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 412.

<sup>10</sup> *Bulletin of Atlanta University*, No. 24, 1891. Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center, Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>11</sup> Ali, *In the Lion’s Mouth*, 154.

independence, and race solidarity. Accordingly, the black middle class concentrated its efforts on community building.”<sup>12</sup> Around this period, Wright’s work became more community-orientated and he established the Farmers Conference, the Wiregrass Conference (1899) and the “Negro” state fair (1906). In 1903, the *New York Evening Post* declared that Wright’s purpose in organising the annual Wiregrass Conference was to “bring his work into closest touch with the most vital needs of the masses of the Negro people”.<sup>13</sup> These community building efforts were an opportunity to advance the goals of the black community, as African Americans were denied access to the political mainstream.

The phrase employed by the *Atlanta Independent*, the “people’s movement”, is therefore significant as it conveyed a sense of the grassroots activism within the fair, one powered by local groups rather than through traditional party politics.<sup>14</sup> The newspaper’s use of the term “movement” urged its black readers to consider how political action could be fuelled by community endeavours such as the fair – suggesting that the event could offer an alternative pathway into black civic power. This different route towards political power corresponds with assertions by historians, such as Steven Hahn, who argue that early black institutions and other grassroots associations helped form the launch pad for the communal activism of the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>15</sup> Although, as Robert Cook has recognised, claims of empowerment and community

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<sup>12</sup> Fon Louise Gordon, *Class and Caste: The Black Experience in Arkansas 1880-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 6.

<sup>13</sup> *Bulletin of Atlanta University*, 1903, No.135.

<sup>14</sup> *Atlanta Independent*, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1910.

<sup>15</sup> Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

building can sometimes “overstate the ability of blacks to control their own lives in an age in which racism and capitalist development were twin barriers to black advancement on a community front”.<sup>16</sup> Cook additionally stresses that community-based institutions were an “essential pre-condition for the development of a viable civil rights movement which could appeal to black people across classes and geographical space.”<sup>17</sup>

Evidence of black political activism, economics and racial consciousness at the black fair corresponds with assertions regarding a larger mass movement which historians have defined as the Long Civil Rights Movement. The “classical phase” of the Civil Rights Movement was considered to have started in 1954 with the *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka* decision which ruled that the racial segregation of public schools was unconstitutional. Subsequently, from 1954 to 1965, African Americans won significant battles in the advancement of racial equality. The Civil Rights Movement, however, did not evolve in a social or political vacuum and localised struggles, leaders, associations and institutions, such as the fair, helped inform and formulate a more politicised mindset which contributed to the a longer struggle. The political sentiment at the black fair helped contribute towards this evolving liberal and political movement, even within the very early period of the twentieth century.

Activism within Macon’s black community, which pre-dated the fair, illustrates the political awareness of Macon’s leading African American members in the face of

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<sup>16</sup> Robert Cook, *Sweet Land of Liberty? The African American Struggle for Civil Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 1998), 43.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 43-44.



increased social and political repression. Blacks in Macon, Georgia had, by the end of the decade, established an “Anti-Mob and Lynch Law Association” and invited Booker T. Washington to come and speak on “Mobbing and Lynching and the General Condition of the Country”.<sup>18</sup> In February 1906, inspired by Du Bois’ Niagara Movement, Macon’s African American community organised an Equal Rights Convention during which 500 delegates met to discuss various aspects of black life. The leading minister, Reverend William J. White of Savannah, who had worked with Wright at the *Georgia Baptist*, told his audience that, “we must agitate, complain, protest, and keep protesting against the invasion of our manhood rights...and above all organize these million brothers of ours into one great fist which shall never cease to pound at the gates of opportunity until they shall fly open.”<sup>19</sup> Du Bois also appeared at the conference, condemning the Jim Crow system of the South and, in particular segregation on public seating, as “harsh, degrading and unjust”.<sup>20</sup> These two symposia showed that even during the early twentieth century the African American community in Macon was not passive as members actively organised and agitated for their civil and social rights. The influence and presence of Du Bois and Washington in Macon, in the same year that the fair was inaugurated, demonstrates how significant black ideology and leaders were to the event.

On a larger scale, the fair helped connect Macon’s black residents with national black political and social figures who, in their speeches, spoke about a variety of issues which

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<sup>18</sup> Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet*, 428.

<sup>19</sup> Andrew M. Manis, *Macon: Black and White, An Unutterable Separation in the American Century* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press and Tubman African American Museum, 2004), 23.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

affected the black community. Listening to politicised black speakers was especially significant given the lack of access to black newspapers within rural areas and, of course, illiteracy rates amongst the black population.<sup>21</sup> In 1911, James C. Napier, black treasurer of the United States, gave a speech at the fairgrounds.<sup>22</sup> Napier specifically used his speech to criticise the attitude of Georgia's Governor, Hoke Smith, who had argued that the "negro is not progressive". Indeed, Napier stressed in his speech that, "if the governor were brought face to face with the proposition of losing [the] moiety of his citizenship of his state, his mind would doubtless undergo a change in less time than it took him to produce the interview."<sup>23</sup> Napier's words criticised white authority and stressed the importance of the black population as a coherent whole. Other speakers included Roscoe Conkling Simmons, who spoke to the fair's audience about lynching, education and black citizenship. Simmons was considered to be "one of the best orators of the race", and entertained one of the largest audiences at Macon's 1918 Black Fair with his speech entitled "My Country, My Flag, My Race". Simmons' oratorical skills were recognised by the United States government, which sought to harness his ability during the First World War to gain black support. Subsequently, in 1918, Simmons' speaking tours were sponsored by the Military Intelligence branch of the War Department General staff.

Direct details of Simmons' speech at Macon's fair are not available but, during this period, Simmons toured lodges, fairs and African American community events giving

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<sup>21</sup> These statistics are discussed in Chapter Three, pp.178-179.

<sup>22</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>23</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

variations of the same speech.<sup>24</sup> Details of when it was delivered in Montgomery, Alabama in 1917 indicate that Simmons asserted a sense of black citizenship whilst also denouncing white violence towards black citizens.<sup>25</sup> The *Chicago Defender* reported how Simmons “thundered” to the whites in the crowd that “when you deny that you were at the lynching party, He [God] will inquire if you knew anything about it, and He will know whether the answer is true.”<sup>26</sup> His tirade asserted that whites would be spiritually judged, and suffer, as a result of their involvement in lynching. Simmons also framed black participation in the war within a larger context of black struggle for citizenship in America. He spoke of how the war was “divinely appointed,” stressing that “the longer we fight the more chains will be broken”.<sup>27</sup> When speaking at the Tri-State Fair in Memphis, Tennessee, Simmons had similarly used the war to rally against white violence to black citizens, asserting: “You must stop killing and burning our men. Before the war is over we are going to need every member of my Race to stop the Germans.”<sup>28</sup> Simmons’ speech appealed to a sense of white pragmatism, as it stressed that the black race were needed to help protect the white race, ultimately emphasising how lynching did not practically benefit the white community.

Simmons’s “My Race” speech at the Memphis Tri-State Fair contained other elements encompassed within the black uplift movement: he stressed the need for women’s virtue, alongside the importance of education for children and of building better homes.

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<sup>24</sup> Andrew Kaye, “Roscoe Conkling Simmons and the Significance of African American Oratory”, *Historical Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (March 2002), 81.

<sup>25</sup> *Macon News*, November 24<sup>th</sup>, 1918.

<sup>26</sup> *Chicago Defender*, December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1917.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Chicago Defender*, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1917.

These speeches proceeded and complemented exhibits of progress and dialogues of racial uplift expressed during Georgia's black state fair.<sup>29</sup> His repetitious use of the phrase "my Race" fostered a sense of collective identity and communal experience within black fair crowds. Andrew Kaye argues that such speeches formed part of a wider level of politicisation among blacks. Local clubs, combined with the multiple roles of civic, church and educational leaders, reinforced the "connections between communities, institutions and individuals."<sup>30</sup> Kaye argues that public speeches meant that racial matters were not purely confined "within the black world, if their concerns could be articulated more broadly through spokesmen like Simmons".<sup>31</sup> The black fair, therefore, granted individual African American orators a public platform, which asserted a sense of collective identity.

#### *Early Black Political Associations and Ideology*

The fair stressed the political importance of a strong black economic position. This premise was found in many different strands of African American political thought throughout the twentieth century, ranging from leaders such as Washington and Du Bois as well as in the ethos of associations such as the Negro Business League (NBL) and the NAACP. The idea of a black business league had originally been Du Bois', suggested in 1899 during a conference at Atlanta University entitled "The Negro in Business".<sup>32</sup> Booker T. Washington established the NBL in 1900 as a trade association for a variety

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Kaye, "Roscoe Conkling Simmons", 81.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 99.

of African American business ventures which helped to advertise and promote the success of various black businesses.<sup>33</sup> As Steven Hahn argues, such similarities between the different strands of black ideologies “evidences a hybridity of politics and political ideas among African Americans that defies the customary oppositions of integrationism and separatism, assimilation and nationalism, NAACP and UNIA (Universal Negro Improvement Association), civil rights and black power”.<sup>34</sup> Louis Harlan similarly asserts, “in their economic thought, Washington and Du Bois at the turn of the century were not far apart.”<sup>35</sup> Washington claimed that the “economic approach would re-establish political and civil rights on a firmer basis, and thus provide a new emancipation.”<sup>36</sup> He also saw economics as a way to “get the race upon such an intellectual, industrial, and financial footing that it will be able to enjoy without too much trouble all the rights inherent in American citizenship.”<sup>37</sup> In 1898, Du Bois gave a speech about the “Meaning of Business” which echoed Washington’s mercantilist sentiment: “The day the Negro race courts and marries the savings bank will be the day of its salvation.”<sup>38</sup> Wright also agreed with these sentiments and, in his lectures, he

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<sup>33</sup> Nina Mjagkij (ed.), *Organising Black America: An Encyclopaedia of African American Associations* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc. 2001), 427.

<sup>34</sup> Steven Hahn, *The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), 150.

<sup>35</sup> Raymond Smock (ed.), *Booker T. Washington in Perspective: Essays of Louis R. Harlan* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006), 108.

<sup>36</sup> Smock (ed.), *Booker T. Washington in Perspective*, 105.

<sup>37</sup> Excerpt from Booker T. Washington, *The Future of the American Negro* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1899) in Hugh Hawkins (ed.), *Booker T. Washington and his Critics: Black Leadership in Crisis*, Second Edition (Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1974), 116.

<sup>38</sup> Excerpt from Francis L. Broderick, *W.E.B Du Bois: Negro Leader in a Time of Crisis* in Hawkins (ed.), *Booker T. Washington and his Critics*, 71.

called upon blacks to “boldly [enter] into the lines of production in industry, manufacturing, domestic and foreign commerce and all avenues of business” as such action would bring “power and prestige to the race.”<sup>39</sup>

Economic exhibits at the fair shared many similarities with the founding tenets of Garveyism and its associated organisation, the UNIA. Founded by Jamaican Marcus Garvey, Garveyism rapidly gained popularity among the black community in the 1920s through its promotion of the importance of a unified black race, black economic self-sufficiency and Black Nationalism as realised through repatriation to Africa. The self-reliance and economic nationalism espoused through Garveyism were already familiar to rural southerners before Garveyism gave it a cohesive political agenda. Mary Rolinson states: “Booker T. Washington paved the way on the principles of economic independence; then Garveyites perpetuated this ideal thought with their ‘New Negro’ leader.”<sup>40</sup> The fair likewise manifested many of the positive attributes of Washingtonian policy which later informed Garvey’s ideology. Harold Cruse has pointed out how the economic strategies of Washington were adopted by Garvey and echoed in the Black Power Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Cruse stresses how “[t]he Nation of Islam was nothing but a form of Booker T. Washington’s economic self-help, black unity, bourgeois hard work, law abiding, vocational training, stay-out-of-the-civil-rights-struggle agitation, separate-from-the-white-man, etc. etc., morality.”<sup>41</sup> The

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<sup>39</sup> June O. Patton, “Major Richard Robert Wright, Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia, 1880-1920” (Unpublished Ph. D dissertation, University of Chicago, 1980), 627.

<sup>40</sup> Mary Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Rural South, 1920-1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 162.

<sup>41</sup> Harold Cruse, *Rebellion or Revolution?* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1968), 211.

connection, therefore, between economics, occupations and Black Nationalism was, and still is, one which has deep roots within black political ideology.

Many black ideologues deemed economic affluence as being pivotal to encouraging black influence and power on a social and political level. Washington's own role in Tuskegee gained him a powerful conservative following which allowed him influence over black colleges, schools and newspapers and even secured him a role as advisor on race relations to President Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>42</sup> Privately, the money gained from his position at Tuskegee also allowed Washington to challenge discrimination in the voting system and the exclusion of blacks from jury panels in the courts.<sup>43</sup> Though private, these legal challenges were early forerunners of the challenges mounted by the NAACP. Similarly to Washington, the NAACP often experienced limited success during the first decade of its inception, but these challenges were significant to an understanding of why black economic power was promoted and how such economic clout led to the ability to challenge white authority through the legal system.

Many African American leaders saw payment of taxes as proof of citizenship and used taxation to argue for black civic entitlement and the right to vote. In 1906, during the Equal Rights Convention, Du Bois had also stressed how voting formed the "bedrock principle of American citizenship". He advised black Georgians "to pay their taxes and qualify themselves as voters by registering," particularly because the poll tax funded the state's public school system.<sup>44</sup> Speakers and newspapers commenting on the fair often

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<sup>42</sup> Smock (ed.), *Booker T. Washington in Perspective*, 112.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>44</sup> Manis, *Macon: Black and White*, 24

used it as an opportunity to emphasise the taxes paid by the African American community. In 1906, for example, the *Savannah Tribune* calculated that “[c]ounting city, county and all property, the colored people pay taxes on more than \$18,087,934. In a word, the colored people started forty years ago with absolutely nothing and today pay tax on more than \$18,000,000 worth of property.”<sup>45</sup> In 1891, Wright had also emphasised how taxes entitled the African American community to more educational opportunities, when he declared that “according to the estimate given to me by the State School Department, the colored population contributes \$48,941,39, more than is paid out for their own education. With these facts and figures in mind I cannot see how the Negro is such a burden to the white people of the South. He is evidently clothing and feeding himself, and I am confident that he is contributing his portion to the Negro school fund.”<sup>46</sup> The 1907 sociological report generated from the black fair by Monroe Work and Richard Wright Jr. therefore had wider political implications that went beyond the yearly event of the fair, as it was evidence of black tax payers and, therefore, black entitlement for state funds towards education.<sup>47</sup>

On a deeper level, Washington, Du Bois and Garvey and their organisations had fundamental differences which governed their attitude towards black labour and economics. Washington’s view of racial separatism, which he famously characterised as being like the fingers on a hand, was ideologically different from the militant black separatism advocated by Garvey and the later Black Power Movement. In the early

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<sup>45</sup>*Savannah Tribune*, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

<sup>46</sup>*Bulletin of Atlanta University*, 1891, No. 24.

<sup>47</sup>*Bulletin of Atlanta University*, 1907, No. 171. Statistics of this report are discussed in Chapter Three, 169.



twentieth century, Washington's supporters essentially formed a conservative stronghold in many communities, and a rallying point against the Niagara Movement and NAACP, who were considered to be more radical.<sup>48</sup> Despite their similar advancement of the principles of black business and property ownership, the NAACP and UNIA occupied different positions on the issue of integration: the former advocated it, the latter believed in separation. The promotion of black businesses and property ownership, therefore, contributed towards different goals. In the case of the NAACP, economic power would allow African Americans to compete equally with whites in an open society; for the UNIA, economic affluence was a means to attaining independence from whites.

African American speakers urged their black audiences at the fair to consider the worthwhile role they played in the southern economy. Wright himself had previously recognised the value of black labour, stating in 1891 that, “[w]e are doing for the South over one thousand million dollars worth of work every year at lower wages than is paid any other class of laborers in America. We are doing this without strikes and without labor riots. It is admitted that we are the most peaceable and patient laborers in the world.”<sup>49</sup> In other writings and appearances Wright noted that if the black man could gain “control of his economic resources” and create positions of employment for black people they would in effect “control a major segment of the South’s labor market.”<sup>50</sup> At a later speech during Macon’s inaugural fair Washington similarly stressed black opportunity and power gained through participation in southern industry, stating that:

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<sup>48</sup> Smock (ed.), *Booker T. Washington in Perspective*, 101.

<sup>49</sup> *Bulletin of Atlanta University*, 1891, No. 24.

<sup>50</sup> Patton, “Major Richard Robert Wright, Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia, 1880-1920”, 627.

“we must remember that a large part of the industrial activity of the South is dependent on us. We have it, to a large degree, in our control.”<sup>51</sup> This message does not suggest a passive acceptance of disfranchisement but, instead, denotes an awareness of the power that black contributions towards industrial work could generate. It formed part of the narrative which Steven Hahn calls the “complex and contradictory relation between labor and political democracy in the United States.”<sup>52</sup>

The fair also promoted occupations outside of industrial sectors, stressing the importance of black business, agricultural and professional positions. The event regularly hosted days such as Business Men’s Day and Farmers’ Day, which emphasised a range of occupations and economic opportunities for black citizens. The *Savannah Tribune* stressed that: “[e]very farmer, mechanic, artisan, etc. should commence preparing exhibits and prove to the country that we stand for something.”<sup>53</sup> While promoting professional vocations the fair itself was also evidence of a small business venture in which African Americans could own stocks and shares.<sup>54</sup>

This fair’s organisers were also involved with other African American business ventures such as the NBL. The fair and the NBL both furthered black uplift, especially business and economic growth, thereby demonstrating a similar ethos. Under Washington’s influence, however, both the fair and the NBL were still bound by economic moderation, which allowed them to operate and work with the white community.

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<sup>51</sup> Charles J. Elmore, *Richard R. Wright Sr. at GSIC, 1891-1921: A Protean Force for the Social Uplift and Higher Education of Black Americans* (Savannah, Georgia: Privately printed, 1996), 42.

<sup>52</sup> Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 9.

<sup>53</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1906.

<sup>54</sup> Black businesses are discussed in length in Chapter Three, pp. 160 - 161.

Through the NBL, Washington had a connection with the organisers of the state fair, while Wright had attended a 1905 meeting of the Savannah's NBL during which Washington addressed those present on what was needed to ensure success in trade.<sup>55</sup> In 1915, the year before C. H. Douglass took over the fair's management, Douglass too appeared at the 16<sup>th</sup> annual NBL convention where he discussed the importance of qualities such as "good common sense, honesty and pluck."<sup>56</sup> The popularity of the NBL and its ideology grew and, by the year Douglass spoke, NBL membership had swelled to 600 local leagues and was more broadly estimated at anywhere from between 5,000 to 40,000 in thirty-six states and West Africa.<sup>57</sup> It is hardly surprising that at least two of the fair's organisers were involved with the NBL as both associations provided support for black businesses, attracting people of the black middle and business class whose professions ranged from businessmen to lawyers and doctors to educators.<sup>58</sup> All these occupations were mentioned in conjunction with various days and conferences during the black state fair.<sup>59</sup>

Georgia's black state fair was a local example of a separate black institution which the NBL advocated and supported; it allowed African Americans the chance to own stocks

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<sup>55</sup> Elmore, *Richard R. Wright Sr.*, 38.

<sup>56</sup> C. H. Douglass, "Managing a Negro Theatre" in the report of the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Negro Business League (Annual Conference Proceedings) 1915, Records of the National Negro Business League, 186, Charles Douglass Business Records, Washington Memorial Library.

<sup>57</sup> Smock (ed.), *Booker T. Washington in Perspective*, 101.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Doctors, for example, are referred to in *Macon Telegraph*, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1913; teachers in *Savannah Tribune*, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1906.

while similarly encouraging and promoting many local black businesses.<sup>60</sup> Many economic aspects of the NBL were quite radical as, under Washington's direction, the organisation "unabashedly presented the case for a segregated black economy and the exaltation of black businessmen to a high place parallel to that of white businessmen".<sup>61</sup> Members were encouraged to "buy black" and black businesses were aided and promoted within the local community.<sup>62</sup> Washington similarly urged black businessmen to come to the South, touting it as the best place in which to foster black business enterprises among people. The effect of segregation, Washington declared "has frequently been to create for the Negro a special business opportunity".<sup>63</sup> Garvey ideas later bore marked similarities to Washington and in an article in *Champion* magazine, in 1917 Garvey wrote: "I have seen Negro banks in Washington and Chicago, stores, cafes, restaurants, theatres and real estate agencies that fill my heart with joy to realize, in positive truth, and not by sentiment, that at one center of Negrodom, at least, the people of the race have sufficient pride to do things for themselves." Garvey further stressed that, "[t]he acme of American Negro enterprise is not yet reached. You have still a far way to go. You want more stores, more banks, and bigger enterprises."<sup>64</sup> In 1919, his editorial letter, entitled "The Negro should be a party to the commercial conquest of the world" declared that, "[i]f we are to rise as great [people] to become a

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<sup>60</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1908. The importance of stocks and shares are also discussed in Chapter Three, p. 79.

<sup>61</sup> Smock (ed.), *Booker T. Washington in Perspective*, 102.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>64</sup> Marcus Garvey, "West Indies in the Mirror of Truth" *Champion Magazine*, January 1917, in Robert A. Hill (ed.), *Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), vol. 7, 197.

great national force, we must start business enterprises of our own”.<sup>65</sup> The idea of separate business institutions and events such as the black fair therefore resonated across a range of political ideologies, both during Reconstruction and during the later Civil Rights period.

### *Agriculture at the Fair*

Agricultural exhibits, days and demonstrations at the fair similarly exhibited ways in which black farmers could economically elevate themselves and effectively become businessmen rather than merely farmers or sharecroppers. Appealing to a wider community beyond the small businessman, Mary Rolinson asserts that the philosophy of black economic self-reliance espoused by Washington and then later by Garvey “made perfect sense to the still dependent tenant farmer and often precariously independent black landowner.”<sup>66</sup> Many African Americans worked in farming, making them a significant part of the southern economic structure, as Du Bois concluded in 1900: “agricultural industry is dependent to a very large degree upon the cooperation of the negro farmer”.<sup>67</sup> Historian Jarod Roll further asserts that the tradition of agriculture was deeply rooted in the lives of many black African Americans and “their lives and

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<sup>65</sup> Marcus Garvey, “The Negro Should Be a Party to the Commercial Conquest of the World. Wake Up You Lazy Men of the Race-This is the Time of Preparation for All”, Baltimore, Maryland, January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1919 in Hill (ed.), *Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, 352.

<sup>66</sup> Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 162.

<sup>67</sup> Debra A. Reid, *Reaping a Greater Harvest: African Americans, The Extension Service, and Rural Reform in Jim Crow Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), xx.

labors on the land provided the foundation for stable kinship networks, community cohesion and leadership, and autonomy and dignity in the face of white oppression.”<sup>68</sup>

Because agriculture was important, both within the southern economic framework and in terms of communal ties for many African Americans, it was often integrated into black political ideologies. This line of thinking can be traced from the idealised agrarian Jeffersonian emphasis on independence, landownership and civic duty to Reconstruction movements such as the Colored Farmers’ Alliance. In the twentieth century, both Washingtonian and Garveyite ideology opposed the notion that farm work was a means by which to ensure black subjugation, a notion held by many white landowners and elites. The two black leaders, instead, focused on the independence and, by association, the civic and political power that agriculture could grant. In 1897, the Tuskegee Institute had opened an agricultural building which was headed by George W. Carver, whom Washington described as a “thoroughly educated man in all matters pertaining to agriculture” who helped put the Agricultural Department on “such a high plane that the students no longer look upon agriculture as a drudgery, and many of our best students are anxious to enter the Agricultural Department.”<sup>69</sup> In 1915 Garvey, likewise, declared that, in order to achieve a “better state among our people,” the UNIA wanted to establish an “industrial farm and institute” in Jamaica. This would provide better knowledge and appreciation of agriculture and train skilled workers in order to advance black economic independence.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Jarod Roll, *Spirit of Rebellion: Labor and Religion in the New Cotton South* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 53.

<sup>69</sup> Booker T. Washington, *The Story of My Life and Work* [1901] (New York: Cosimo, Inc, 2007), 213.

<sup>70</sup> Address by Marcus Garvey, *Daily Chronicle*, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1915 in Hill (ed.), *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, Vol. I, 132.

In reality, many black farmers were denied the monetary benefits of operating within the expanding economic marketplace that emerged during the twentieth century. In his 1900 report on agriculture, Du Bois noted how black farmers were economically marginalised, concluding that “while blacks operated more than one-quarter of all farms in the South, they cultivated only one-sixth of all the improved land, produced only one-sixth of the South’s gross products, and controlled only one-ninth of southern farmers’ property values.”<sup>71</sup> The *Atlanta Independent* had also recognised that, while black farmers were involved with the production of wealth, they did not equally benefit from their labour and many black rural farmers lived on the poverty line.<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless, Du Bois noted evidence of mobilisation within the sector as farmers were able to accumulate property steadily, despite discrimination.<sup>73</sup> Due to this mobilisation, black southern landowners and farmers wielded an increased economic and social leverage within the black community as both producers and consumers. This accumulation of property and economic wealth was seen as an avenue towards social and civic advancement for the farmers and showed the mobility that agriculture could grant. While this idea related to Washington’s ideology, Roll’s work stresses how this belief was shared by Garvey farmers in the Bootheel area of Missouri, who “believed their hard work and accumulation of property would generate the power needed to redeem the race in the United States.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Reid, *Reaping a Greater Harvest*, xx.

<sup>72</sup> *Atlanta Independent*, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1910.

<sup>73</sup> Reid, *Reaping a Greater Harvest*, xx.

<sup>74</sup> Roll, *Spirit of Rebellion*, 69.

Displays at the fair reveal the aspirations of southern black farmers and their desire to establish and perpetuate a degree of economic independence and racial uplift. Organisers of the fair deliberately courted the farming community and encouraged them to attend. There were annual “Farmers’ Days” held during the fair which, in 1911, “brought a large number of negro farm labourers, farm tenants and owners to the negro state fair [yesterday], who together with their wives and children viewed the agricultural exhibits”.<sup>75</sup> Cash prizes were given out as incentives for farmers to attend the fair and, in 1913, \$5,000.00 were given out in premiums for farm products.<sup>76</sup> Organisers were eager for farmers to attend because the black state fair was considered to be a venue through which the agricultural community could learn to further itself, helping to elevate the farming profession and similarly increase its affluence. The *Atlanta Independent* pointed out the importance of this association, stating that: “The farmer, like the lawyer and every professional man, must have some organization among themselves for individual and collective improvement.”<sup>77</sup> The newspaper pointed out that the white state fair was run by the white Agricultural Association; the black state fair would therefore help Georgia’s 150,000 Negro farmers to be “counted in the industrial and economic equation of the South just in proportion as we make ourselves felt in the production of wealth”.<sup>78</sup> The fair promoted the positive attributes of agriculture and the *Atlanta Independent* argued that the “purpose of the fair is to dignify farm labor”.<sup>79</sup> In 1908, field agent R.E. Thomas stated: “My special work will be to encourage farmers along agricultural and industrial pursuits, which is the only medium

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<sup>75</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, November 18th, 1911.

<sup>76</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1913.

<sup>77</sup>*Atlanta Independent*, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1910.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*



open to our people as a whole.”<sup>80</sup> His words showed that leaders focused on bringing dignity and respect to those professions which were open to blacks, elevating them as means to empower African Americans rather than subjugate them. An advertisement for the 1910 “Great Colored State Fair and Exposition” stated that “the agricultural classes are the most independent of our population when they farm successfully and prosperously.”<sup>81</sup> Indeed, some exhibits directly connected to tenets of Jeffersonian democracy which connected farming to freedom, such as the slogan on the 1917 Bibb County exhibit pronouncing “Farming is Liberty”.<sup>82</sup>

African American newspapers regularly cited property and production statistics of Georgia’s black farmers, using them to evidence the mobility that agriculture could grant. In association with the 1906 fair, the *Savannah Tribune* claimed that: “[t]he colored farmers of Georgia own 1,284,536 acres of land. They have \$3,889,441 worth of horses, mules and cattle and stock of all kinds and \$880,559 worth of plantation and mechanical tools.”<sup>83</sup> Again, in 1911, the *Tribune* extolled the economic progress of Georgia’s farmers stressing: “[y]ou cultivate more than six million acres of Georgia lands. You operate as owners and have tenant farms valued at \$48,683,231. You expend annually for fertilizers \$1,684,010. You own livestock valued at \$1,293,810. You grow annually between five and six hundred thousand bales of cotton. The total value of farm products of the negroes of Georgia amounts to somewhere between thirty-five and forty

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<sup>80</sup>*Savannah Tribune*, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1908.

<sup>81</sup>*Atlanta Independent*, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1910.

<sup>82</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1917.

<sup>83</sup>*Savannah Tribune*, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

millions of dollars. Your poultry alone is valued at \$320,200.”<sup>84</sup> These statistics corresponded with evidence of increased black farm ownership across the South during this period. Steven Hahn states that, at the turn of the twentieth century, “more than one in five African American farm operators in the South owned some or all of the soil they tilled, and the proportion was considerably higher in certain parts of the region.”<sup>85</sup> In Georgia, the land acreage owned by blacks nearly tripled, while its value almost quadrupled, between 1875 and 1900.<sup>86</sup>

Farmers were encouraged to diversify their methods and crops, which in turn helped strengthen their economic position. Wright believed that black farmers’ greatest drawback was “a lack of working knowledge of the soil,” scientific methods and business “know how”.<sup>87</sup> In 1901, he had pleaded with the Federal Commission on Immigration and Education to do something “for the improvement of Negro farm laborers”. Wright asked that scientific agricultural programs, experimental stations, and literature on farming be provided for blacks.<sup>88</sup> The state fair, therefore, provided a way for Wright to do something for black farm workers. Starting only four months prior to Georgia’s black fair, displays of farming techniques were demonstrated through Tuskegee’s “movable school”, a Jessup agricultural wagon, which contained special equipment to carry farm demonstrations to the door of the poorest farmers.<sup>89</sup> The fair

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<sup>84</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>85</sup> Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 457.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 457-58.

<sup>87</sup> Patton, “Major Richard Robert Wright Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia, 1880-1920”, 621.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 432.

<sup>89</sup> Virginia Lantz Denton, *Booker T. Washington and the Adult Education Movement* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 113.

likewise presented a forum in which farmers could learn ways to improve their farming techniques which, the *Atlanta Independent* believed, would help “increase our wage earning capacity”.<sup>90</sup> Improved revenue in turn created a degree of economic autonomy for black farmers and organisers and agricultural displays were used to “show farmers ways to be part of this progress and improve their prosperity”.<sup>91</sup>

By promoting the benefits of scientific farming, the black fair’s organisers helped tie rural black farmers into America’s increasingly nationalised and industrial economic market. The 1910 fair helped “show a tendency on the part of the negro farmer to cultivate other products than cotton”.<sup>92</sup> As Eugene Davenport observed in 1912, scientific farming was “necessary to the establishment of a market for agricultural produce and for the development of the second stage of agricultural evolution; namely the money-making era.”<sup>93</sup> The following year an “informal discussion of scientific farming methods was held” at the fair.<sup>94</sup> In 1914, Wright stressed that “the fair will be a further argument for crop diversification”. Wright argued that “the exhibits at the fair, from more than forty counties, [would] demonstrate that the negro farmer of Georgia is already reducing his cotton acreage and practising diversification.”<sup>95</sup> In 1918, black farmers from Huston, Dodge, Monroe and Bibb Counties all had exhibits in the

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<sup>90</sup>*Atlanta Independent*, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1910.

<sup>91</sup> Donald Grant, *The Way It Was in the South: The Black Experience in the South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 247.

<sup>92</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1910.

<sup>93</sup> Eugene Davenport, “Scientific Farming”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 40. March, 1912, 45.

<sup>94</sup>*Macon News*, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1913.

<sup>95</sup>*Macon News*, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1914.

agricultural building which showed that “farmers [were] diversifying the crops and [had] made great progress in their work and methods”.<sup>96</sup> While relating to the aggregate of wealth, crop diversification was also taken as evidence of black progress. As Wright said, “I verily believe that in proportion to their numbers, there are more negro farmers than white farmers who have self-sustaining farms.”<sup>97</sup>

The economic significance of increased agricultural productivity resulted in further contact with governmental and official bodies. By the first decade of the twentieth century, agents of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) were starting to appear at the state and county fairs across the South in an attempt to interact with rural farmers.<sup>98</sup> In 1903, packages of vegetable seeds were distributed to participants of the farmers’ conferences held at the Georgia State Industrial College (GSIC) whose presence within Georgia’s black fair further testified to the southern black farmer’s worth within a national economic framework.<sup>99</sup> In 1911, a demonstration agent called A. E. Gentry acted as part of the fair’s agricultural judging panel. Gentry “spoke to the farmers with reference to the conservation of the soil, about fertilizers, about rotation of crops and diversified farming and answered many questions put to him by the negro farmers”. Gentry also distributed portions of seeds to the farmers, and the *Telegraph* declared that “the farmers’ meeting was one of the most important and interesting of the fair.”<sup>100</sup> Farmers’ Days were also used to help black farmers facing the potentially devastating effects of the boll weevil which fed on cotton buds: in 1916 organisers

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<sup>96</sup> *Macon News*, November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1918.

<sup>97</sup> *Macon News*, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1914.

<sup>98</sup> Reid, *Reaping a Greater Harvest*, 11.

<sup>99</sup> Patton, “Major Richard Robert Wright, Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia, 1880-1920”, 494.

<sup>100</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

declared Thursday to be Farmers' Day where "all are urged to attend as talks on the ravages of the boll weevil will be given by experts."<sup>101</sup>

*The 1909 "Wright Vs. Kauffman" Court Case, Education and Culture*

Blacks wielded a degree of influence through their contribution to the southern economy. As stressed repeatedly the fair highlighted and encouraged black industrial occupations. A 1909 court case demonstrated how white citizens in turn afforded Macon's African Americans, via the black fair association, a degree of legal and economic retribution against a white outsider. On November 24<sup>th</sup> 1909, a grand jury assembled in Macon's courthouse to decide the outcome between Richard Wright, a black citizen of Savannah, and Frederick Kauffman, a white Midway organizer, who had been in charge of promoting the fair's entertainment.<sup>102</sup> Wright, representing the "Georgia State Colored Agricultural and Industrial Association" was named as chief prosecutor in the case, bringing charges of embezzlement against the accused, Kauffman.<sup>103</sup> The case was significant on a basic level as a black man was the prosecutor, but also because the case progressed some way through the court system. Because the fair was considered a recreational, rather than politicised, event by the white community, the fair's black organisers were granted the rare legal opportunity to take a white man to court after he was accused of stealing money from the association.

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<sup>101</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1916.

<sup>102</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1909. From the *Macon Telegraph*'s reference to Kauffman as "Mr." we can assume Kauffman was white as this title was used in relation to white men according to racial etiquette during this period.

<sup>103</sup> Bibb County Court House Records, Superior Court Minutes/Docket, Case #77, *Georgia Agricultural and Industrial Association vs. Frederick Kauffman*, November, 20<sup>th</sup>, 1909.

Despite Kauffman's earlier claim that his acquittal was "a matter of course," he agreed to settle.<sup>104</sup> Kauffman's faith in his acquittal is indicative of the warped balance of power that existed between black and white citizens especially during a period when white jurors were often reluctant to indict or convict those of their own race.<sup>105</sup> Kauffman's agreement to pay all the "costs of the said prosecution" suggests that the grand jury would have found enough evidence to take the case to trial.<sup>106</sup> This court case was significant as in 1909 the newly-formed NAACP was only just starting to pursue justice through legal means, though the association often experienced little success during the first decade of its inception.<sup>107</sup> The case therefore demonstrated how the recreational institution of the fair allowed the opportunity for a legal response, one which would not have been ordinarily available. This achievement hinted at the success of the black middle class in its endeavour to obtain recognition and results through community events.

While the fair provided the opportunity for a member of the black community to challenge a white man through the legal system, the power to take him to court, however, rested strongly with Macon's white community. It was only due to white

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<sup>104</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1909.

<sup>105</sup> Donald G. Nieman, *Black Southerners and the Law, 1865-1900* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1994), xi.

<sup>106</sup> Bibb County Court House Records, Superior Court Minutes/Docket, Case #77, *Georgia Agricultural and Industrial Association vs. Frederick Kauffman*, 20<sup>th</sup> November 1909.

<sup>107</sup> Charles Flint Kellogg, *NAACP: A History of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1909-1920* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973). The NAACP went on to tackle larger social issues such as the constitutionality of residential segregation, as in *Buchanan vs. Warley* (1917).

support that the case progressed to the extent it did within the court system, demonstrating how forms of legal and political recourse were dependent on, and controlled by, whites, severely limiting African Americans' legal and civil status. Wright's accusation was buttressed by members of Macon's white elite, as were those who had supported the venture of the black state fair following Atlanta's 1906 riot. In fact, Wright's witnesses were solely composed of Macon's white community, including a justice of the peace, two lawyers and a widowed white woman.<sup>108</sup> Another prominent witness was Flewellen Holt Jr., a member of a well-respected white family in Macon.<sup>109</sup> It would have been significantly more difficult for Wright himself to have gone through legal proceedings without the support of Macon's white community. The grand jury was likewise composed of white men drawn from various sectors of Bibb County's businessmen such as Edgar Mallory, president of the Commercial and National Bank.<sup>110</sup> For the jurors to see white members of similar (or higher) social standing acting as witnesses for Wright would have sent a powerful message that Wright was essentially under the 'protection' of these citizens.

Paternalistic white protection ensured that the court case was bound by moderation and the outcome only allowed black citizens what the white dominated legal system was willing to grant them. It does, however, show a level of racial negotiation that was present via the fair, thus permitting black citizens' limited local legal recourse. Wright

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<sup>108</sup> Macon City Directory, 1909, Vol. VII (R. L. Polk & Co, Macon, Georgia, 1909).

<sup>109</sup> Many of the Holt family had been involved with state legislation and one was a stockholder for the white Georgia state fair, "Minutes of the "Georgia State Fair Association 1909-1911", December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1911, Georgia State Fair Association Collection, Box 11, Folder, 90A.

<sup>110</sup> Macon City Directory, 1909, Vol. VII (Macon, Georgia: R. L. Polk & Co, 1909).

was an important figure and he became a significant linchpin for community relationships, gaining the support of the white legal elite. White backing of a black businessman similarly demonstrated how whites were economically and socially invested in the success of the fair. The fair was a symbol of black and white harmonious relationships in Macon and Kauffman's actions threatened this. White citizens in Macon were therefore willing to work with blacks within their community against a white outsider. While the white willingness to assist in the court case could have been due to the presence of anti-Semitism during this period (Kauffman's name hints at Jewish roots), this case still show that white citizens in Macon were willing to work with blacks in their own community against white outsiders.<sup>111</sup>

On a basic level the fair case in 1909 showed the extent to which the legal system was controlled by whites. Wright had previously recognised how a lack of education limited African American citizens, and he therefore looked to education to help advance the needs of the black citizens. Wright's application for a passport in 1919 drew these earlier concerns together. In 1919 Wright was eager to go to England, France and Belgium in order to "study school conditions."<sup>112</sup> Black citizens were, however, limited in their ability to be successfully granted passports during this period. Similar to the court case Wright's application was successful, in part because it was supported by the

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<sup>111</sup> This would explode soon thereafter with the 1913 trial and lynching of Leo Frank in Georgia who was convicted of the murder of Mary Phagan, and Frank's death soon became a locus for class, religious and political interests. Nancy MacLean, "Gender, Sexuality, and the Politics of Lynching: The Leo Frank Case Revisited" in William Fitzhugh Brundage, *Under the Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 158-188.

<sup>112</sup> Mark Ellis, *Race, War, and Surveillance: African Americans and the United States Government during World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 203.



white Governor of Georgia, Hugh M. Dorsey who “telegraphed the State Department in support of Wright’s proposed tour.”<sup>113</sup> The passport application was evidence of Wright’s interest in education on an international level. It again demonstrated how African Americans were legally restricted and monitored yet simultaneously demonstrated how white support helped secure a passport for Wright passport, which conversely helped him to pursue black educational interests and work.

Education was the bedrock from which African Americans could learn to become lawyers and essentially challenge such racial imbalances in the legal system. Wright often argued in university lectures, that “the race needed good lawyers” who could educate the people as to their rights as well as defend them in the nation’s courts and he called upon young men in his audiences to study law.<sup>114</sup> The emphasis on education showed a marked unwillingness to accept the notion that blacks should accommodate themselves to the subordinate position assigned to them in southern society and Wright stressed how education was also a “means of preparing leaders who would fight for social, economic, and political advancement”.<sup>115</sup> He recognised that education provided the tools through which African Americans could re-enter the voting system. Once this happened, whites would accept black political leadership and both races would elect “those . . . best capable of ruling wisely and honestly”.<sup>116</sup> The presence of many African American schools and scholars at the fair likewise created a marked focus on education during the event.

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Patton, “Major Richard Robert Wright, Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia, 1880-1920”, 628.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 435.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 238.

The intertwining of economics and education created a foundation from which to launch and strengthen the black political position. In 1900, Wright and Du Bois worked as part of the same committee during Atlanta University's Fifth Annual Conference. Together they reported how a study of black graduates "found them entering into business, newspaper work, farming and the trades in increasing numbers. This means that into the masses there is being filtrated a number of thoroughly trained men and women who become social and economic leaders."<sup>117</sup> Black occupational training helped secure future generations of black leaders. Their economic independence was important as this wealth provided the stability and funding through which black citizens could enter into the political mainstream. The statistics from the 1907 Black Fair stressed, along with black property ownership, that there were "2830 public and 251 private schools for the Negroes with a total enrolment of 220,000 under 4,798 teachers," and confirmed that there were "24 schools [now] in operation which [come] under the class of secondary and normal schools and colleges."<sup>118</sup> The fair helped produce the statistical evidence stressing the increase in black education, a move that, in the long term it was hoped, would help create black leaders and voters.

The fair depended on the support not only of churches and church members but also of black fraternal organizations, such as the Knights of Pythias. The Knights of Pythias participated in parades and exhibits and the 1910 fair even held a Knights of Pythias Day.<sup>119</sup> By using elaborate rituals and robes the Knights of Pythias evoked a sense of medieval chivalry and lodges were symbolically called "castles" while members

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<sup>117</sup>*Bulletin of Atlanta University*, No. 111, 1900.

<sup>118</sup>*Bulletin of Atlanta University*, No. 171, 1907.

<sup>119</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1910.

addressed each other as “sir”.<sup>120</sup> For black men and women symbolic rankings of nobility and gestures of respect were important as they psychologically bolstered them against the disrespect they encountered from the white community. In 1913, there was a Secret Orders Day during which “[there were] competitive drills between teams representing the uniform ranks of the negro Knights of Pythias of the state” as well as a musical programme and several addresses.<sup>121</sup> The appearance of fraternal lodges and associations at the fair further helped to politicise the event. They created a recognisable institutional structure for black members, which in turn created a blueprint for the structure of political associations, helping new members to understand how they operated.<sup>122</sup> Martin Summers asserts in his study, *Manliness and its Discontents*, “Along with churches, benevolent associations, and political clubs, Masonic orders played a significant role in the political and reform activities of free black communities in the antebellum period and continued to form the spine of institutional life of post-emancipation communities until at least the middle of the twentieth century.”<sup>123</sup> Writing in 1897, Du Bois observed, “[n]ext to churches in importance come the secret and benevolent associations”.<sup>124</sup> Hahn also argues for the importance of such groups following black disenfranchisement, stating there was a shift “away from political

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<sup>120</sup> Mjagkij (ed.), *Organising Black America*, 168.

<sup>121</sup> *Macon News*, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1913.

<sup>122</sup> After being denied membership of the white Pythians, in 1864, black lodges had appeared in 1880, soon flourished and, by 1905, boasted 70,000 members Clarend M. Phillips, *African American Fraternities and Sororities: The Legacy and the Vision* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 83.

<sup>123</sup> Martin Summers, *Manliness and its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 20-21.

<sup>124</sup> Ali, *In the Lion's Mouth*, 8.

parties and elections and even more decidedly towards churches, schools and lodges as means of community definition, sustenance, and reproduction.”<sup>125</sup>

Fraternal groups performed an important function within black communities during this period as they asserted a sense of black autonomy and communication at both local and state level. They performed philanthropic acts, such as providing support for widows and orphans, whilst also creating a common point of contact between its members. In addition, the Pythians society offered insurance known as “endowment” which supported the families of deceased members.<sup>126</sup> Teaching the benefits of mutual aid and encouraging a sense of dignity and economic self-sufficiency amongst its black members meant that the “Pythians were destined to play a pivotal part in African American political insurgency”.<sup>127</sup> In addition, the structure of the UNIA was directly “modelled after other American fraternal orders in that its active membership was entitled to draw sickness and death benefits from the organization.”<sup>128</sup> Roll argues that, in the UNIA, agrarian Garveyites “combined the social resources of fraternal benevolent associations with the expansive spiritual power of the churches.”<sup>129</sup> Black southerners were therefore able to interpret and further the aims of Garveyism through a pre-existing institutional, spiritual and fraternal format.

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<sup>125</sup> Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 462-63.

<sup>126</sup> Mjagkij (ed.), *Organising Black America*, 168.

<sup>127</sup> Paul Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 116.

<sup>128</sup> E. David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Agency* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 61.

<sup>129</sup> Roll, *Spirit of Rebellion*, 55.

Black fraternal solidarity, which transcended local communities, thrived in the environment of the fair. A sense of black alliance across state lines was also present at Macon's 1912 black fair as there was a "grand interstate prize drill" including Pythians from Georgia, Florida and Alabama.<sup>130</sup> Paul Ortiz stresses the importance of such state alliances since, despite being rooted in local communities, these fraternal affiliations put members in "communication with state and national bodies, thus alleviating the isolating impact of Jim Crow".<sup>131</sup> Their state and local ties, combined with the egalitarianism that the group embodied, granted members a chance to develop "a level of collective self-confidence that allowed them to challenge white supremacy."<sup>132</sup> These fraternities were a vital, self-sufficient base from which African Americans economically, socially and professionally supported one another and the common goal of racial uplift. Their appearance at the fair publicly furthered their mission by embodying black solidarity and independence.

State affiliations meant that, during the black state fair parades, there could be up to four companies of the black Knights of Pythias<sup>133</sup> and the parades often started at Macon's headquarters on New Street.<sup>134</sup> This helped to create a visual symbol of unification and solidarity; an image that was central to the organisation's aims as shown by their national leader's statement that "there is no way of estimating the power and influence

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<sup>130</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1912.

<sup>131</sup> Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed*, 112.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>133</sup> *Macon News*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1913.

<sup>134</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1911; *Macon Telegraph*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1913; *Macon News*, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1916.

we would have, if we act in union for common interest of our ten million people...It is for this reason that I so strongly endorse the movement for the friendly society union or anything else that has for its object the bringing of better conditions for us as a people.”<sup>135</sup> The parade emitted a sense of physical and symbolic mobility: a black community “marching” forward.

The Knights of Pythias often marched as a uniformed body and, during Macon’s 1913 parade, four companies of the “Uniformed Rank” of the Knights of Pythias were followed by a “negro drum and bugle corps”, evoking a sense of martial order. Likewise, during Augusta’s black fair, the Knights of Pythias held a yearly prize drill. Following a similar military vein, during Augusta’s 1911 fair, there was also a parade of “soldier boys and girls”.<sup>136</sup> The white newspapers reference to boys and girls lessened any threat contained in a black military display. The infantilising of participants therefore nullified white fears of African Americans in military uniform and demonstrated how more politicised aspects of the black fair and its parade were contained or limited by white media reports. White fear of Blacks in military uniform had been prevalent since Reconstruction and many white Maconites “found the sight of African Americans in uniforms distasteful.”<sup>137</sup> Blacks in uniform evoked memories of southern military occupation following the Civil War, when the North’s Union forces, which included many African American soldiers, were stationed in southern cities. During the Spanish-American War there were four black units stationed at Camp Haskell near Macon. During their time at Macon’s camp African American soldiers

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<sup>135</sup> Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed*, 101.

<sup>136</sup> *Augusta Chronicle*, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1910.

<sup>137</sup> Manis, *Macon: Black and White*, 55.

were subject to constant harassment from white civilians, soldiers and police. Consequently racial tensions escalated to the point where four black soldiers were killed by groups of whites and three others were killed by street car conductors when they refused to ride in the Jim Crow trailer.<sup>138</sup> In the following years, racial tension continued to surround the army camps in Macon and the South at large.<sup>139</sup> This was demonstrated when over 20 years later, during World War I, there were again several clashes between white and black soldiers in Macon. One of which mirrored the infamous Houston riot a year earlier and resulted in the murder of one black man.<sup>140</sup> White violence towards uniformed blacks made such public displays of black militarism at the black state fair even more significant.

The Odd Fellows, another fraternal organisation, also asserted a strong sense of black citizenship and proffered political demands. In 1911, 50,000 Odd Fellows joined organisers of the fair in urging President Taft to attend, in order to work towards “removing racial friction between the races in every section”<sup>141</sup> The association highlighted their standing as “good citizen[s], contributing in every way possible to the economic, industrial and social development of our common country and section.” This message, published in the *Atlanta Independent*, asserted the Odd Fellows’ rights as citizens and portrayed them as active participants in the political process. The Odd Fellows used the occasion to build bridges with the white authorities, in overcoming the “unfriendliness of the President” (President Taft) towards the black community.<sup>142</sup> At

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<sup>138</sup> Grant, *The Way It Was in the South*, 301.

<sup>139</sup> Manis, *Macon: Black and White*, 55.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>141</sup> *Atlanta Independent*, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

the fair, black associations could offer a meeting ground between blacks and whites to improve racial issues. Consequently, the fair provided a valuable political and social arena in which images of black solidarity and citizenship were foregrounded.

Along with fraternal organisations, churches were often used as bases for organising political movements and promoting influential black thought during this period. Many black leaders originated from, or were closely intertwined with, the work of African American churches. Speakers at the fair often included members of the clergy and a myriad of ministers, ranging from Baptists to Methodists, attended and organised the fair. The South's black religious community were influential figures in southern politics during this period and were later involved in the Civil Rights Movement. For example, Wright's son, Richard Wright Jnr. helped manage some aspects of the black state fair in 1907 (even though the event was still under the overall authority of his father Wright Snr.) and went on to become, "perhaps the most distinguished of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church's twentieth century bishops".<sup>143</sup> In 1948, Wright Jnr. edited an *Encyclopaedia of African Methodism* which catalogued the achievements of pastors in which he listed their educational, religious and political affiliations.<sup>144</sup> Some ministers looked on the project of the state fair as a godly pursuit; R. H. Thomas (first name unknown) in 1908 "obtained from several churches a leave of absence for twelve months to accept the position as field agent for the Georgia State Colored Agricultural

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<sup>143</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1907; James Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 298.

<sup>144</sup> R.R. Wright Jnr. (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of African Methodism* (Philadelphia, The Book Concern of the AME Church, 1947), 310, 311. Wright Jnr. also included details of his father's association with Presidents McKinley and Taft.



and Industrial Association.” Thomas felt this position was important for building his “people along religious and industrial lines” and, in his role as field agent, he could do “equal or more good than [he] could possibly do in [his] immediate work”. He concluded, “therefore, I have accepted this position in which I feel that I can best serve, my Master”.<sup>145</sup> Religious conferences of “negro ministries” at the fair stressed the importance and power of the church as a force for developing the black community, albeit within the confines of the fair and, in 1913, W. N. Ainsworth discussed “[t]he power of the church as a developing and presenting force in the character and development of the race”.<sup>146</sup>

The AME church’s founding ethos promoted both economic development and political agitation, which Ron Brown believes made it a “forerunner of the black economic determinism that would exhibit itself in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Garvey Movement”.<sup>147</sup> Garvey emphasised the connection between himself and such institutions by meeting with leading spiritual and social figures during his tour of North America in 1917. One of these figures was Richard Wright Jr., whom Garvey extolled as one of the “real disciples working for the good of our race.”<sup>148</sup> Garvey also stated that with “men and women of this type, who are conscientious workers, and not mere life service dignitaries, I can quite understand that the time is at hand when the stranger, such as I

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<sup>145</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1908.

<sup>146</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1913.

<sup>147</sup> Ron Brown entry in Paul A. Djupe and Laura R. Olsen, *Encyclopedia of American Religion and Politics* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2003), 12.

<sup>148</sup> “West Indies in the Mirror of Truth”, *Champion Magazine*, January 1917, in Hill (ed.), *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, Vol. I, 198.

am, will discover the American Negro firmly and strongly set on the pinnacle of fame.”<sup>149</sup> Wright Jnr. was also later considered to be affiliated with Garveyism.<sup>150</sup>

Another politically influential AME member who appeared at the fair was Atlanta-based minister, Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, who represented a radical black element within the fair and in black society at large. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a pan-Africanist movement had been sweeping black America, spearheaded by figures such as Turner who promoted a sense of redemption through emigration to Africa. Turner was a person whom Rolinson claims was very influential in helping to develop Garvey’s later stress on “emigrationism, racial pride and self-defence”.<sup>151</sup> In 1875, Turner was appointed honorary vice-president of the American Colonization Society, a post he accepted, promising to “render full service to the best of my ability”.<sup>152</sup> His pervasive influence had been demonstrated in 1899 when around 100 Maconites petitioned Congress for funding to emigrate to Liberia.<sup>153</sup> In 1906, however, Turner became “deeply involved with local politics, trying to stop Georgia from disfranchising her black citizens” according to Edwin Redkey.<sup>154</sup> That same year, Turner gave the opening address at

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>151</sup> Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 24.

<sup>152</sup> The American Colonization Society African Repository, 52:2, April 1875, in Edwin S. Redkey (ed.), *Respect Black: The Writings and Speeches of Henry McNeal Turner* (New York: Arno Press Inc. and the New York Times, 1971), 39.

<sup>153</sup> Manis, *Macon: Black and White*, 24.

<sup>154</sup> Edwin S. Redkey, *Black Exodus: Black Nationalist Back to Africa Movements, 1890-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 275.

Macon's first black fair.<sup>155</sup> His speech was his second in Macon that year. In February, during Macon's 1906 Equal Rights' Convention, Turner had delivered a radical speech, declaring that "[t]o the Negro in the country, the American flag is a dirty and contemptible rag", and went on to state that: "Hell is an improvement upon the United States."<sup>156</sup> Not surprisingly, as historian Donald Grant points out, Turner was "universally disliked" by white Georgians.<sup>157</sup>

The details of Turner's speech at the black fair are not available, although, as the majority of evidence comes from white newspapers, it would be unlikely that they would print any militant or inflammatory aspects of his speech, especially in view of the riots preceding the fair. Considering his speech at Macon eight months earlier, Turner's presence alone at the founding fair created a strong link to radical black political thought during the early twentieth century. Redkey argues that Turner offered an "alternative to the accommodationism of Booker T. Washington". His appearance forces us to look at the fair in a different light, one which moves the event away from being a subtle means to advance African Americans' position within the confines of Jim Crow.<sup>158</sup> The organisers' acceptance of, or invitation to, speakers such as Turner threatened the very notion of the fair as a passive recreational celebration. Edwin Redkey argues that Turner differed from Du Bois and Washington as he was able to speak to, and on behalf of, "the common black man". Turner therefore offered a political alternative, thus attracting many black labourers and share-croppers neglected

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<sup>155</sup> Manis, *Macon: Black and White*, 24. Turner also had connections to Macon, having previously served as the first black postmaster of Macon.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Grant, *The Way it Was in The South*, 113.

<sup>158</sup> Redkey, *Respect Black*, vii.

by Washington and Du Bois.<sup>159</sup> Turner's presence at the fair provides an important link to the radical and black nationalist sentiment contained within Garveyism, a sentiment that was seen to appeal to and capture the support of black labourers and share-croppers later on in that period.

Garvey too revered Africa as the natural and rightful home of the black race. Pan-Africanist discourses stressed the links between the history of African Americans and their origins in Africa as well as the belief that Africa could become scientifically and technologically advanced given the will of the black people. In 1909, the name of Ethiopian Emperor Menelik II was used in relation to the fair's midway, which was entitled, "Menelik Village". None of the newspapers of the time made this link between the fair and the African Emperor explicit, although the sense of black history emphasised in other aspects of the fair suggests an overarching celebration of black history and achievement. From 1889-1914, Menelik II had been widely influential in the modernising of the state through the installation of railroads, urban centres and the development of new technologies.<sup>160</sup> "Menelik Village" therefore symbolised black progress, an ethos which the fair's organisers likewise sought to emulate within the microcosm of the fair.

Displays of black history, relating to Garvey's later effort to bolster a sense of Black Nationalism, also formed a significant component of the fair. Although such displays did not connect black history to the unification of people of the African Diaspora, as

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Thomas P. Ofcansky and LaVerle Berry (eds.), "The Reign of Menelik II, 1889-1913", *Ethiopia: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1991, <http://countrystudies.us/ethiopia/15.htm> (accessed 5.02. 2010).

later advocated by Garvey, they promoted a clear sense of African American history and achievement. Garvey recognised the “modern importance of having a literary history” having seen the way in which “imperialist notions had used written histories to justify their supposed superiority over peoples without documented traditions and historic achievements”.<sup>161</sup> This had allowed colonisers and white supremacists to distort the African past and obscure the achievements of blacks in the diaspora.<sup>162</sup> The fair’s exhibits helped demonstrate the success of the African American community since Emancipation<sup>163</sup> and included currency depicting the faces of black government registers and patents for black inventions.<sup>164</sup> History books and exhibits all created and expanded on a sense of black achievement and history. Displays of achievements and success were not just confined to the political notions of Garveyism but linked also to the NAACP. Early on, the NAACP had pledged that they intended to combat racial stereotypes by advertising the “marvellous achievements of the colored people.”<sup>165</sup> These achievements supported the notion of African American progress and uplift and also interlinked with an overarching sense of black American citizenship within the medium of the fair. In addition, Garvey’s reclamation of history had another important purpose: by bolstering those of African descent psychologically, it in turn rejected concepts of black inferiority.<sup>166</sup> The exhibits at the fair would have performed a similar function for those who came to view them.

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<sup>161</sup> Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 16

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Displays of black success are discussed in Chapter Three, pp. 170-171.

<sup>164</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

<sup>165</sup> Adam Fairclough, “Foreword” in Kevern Verney and Lee Sartain (eds.), *Long is the Way and Hard: One Hundred Years of the NAACP* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2009), xi.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has demonstrated that the intention of the fair's organisers was to further a sense of grassroots activism. It is difficult, however, to determine the reception of the ideas and values promoted within the event. The sources don't allow us to gain much insight into the critical response of the average fairgoer to the didacticism of the fair. Despite this, it seems fair to draw the conclusion that the local medium of the fair did provide many patrons with a uniquely politicised experience, engaging the African American community with various aspects of black politics and culture on both a national and local level.

The exhibits at the fair demonstrated the efforts of early twentieth-century black leadership and a strong grassroots movement, forces which helped lay the foundations for a civic black way of thinking which would prove vital in sustaining and providing the impetus for political membership and affiliation. Consequently, many of the fair's black patrons heard speeches which urged them to consider the vital part they played within the south's economy, culture and society. It also encouraged them to become active members within that economy, a role which black leaders believed would lead to greater civil rights and political participation. Fair exhibits also created an emphasis on agriculture and the role of black farmers in furthering the goals of political movements. Such exhibits show how a strong black economic position and emphasis on property ownership were stressed across a range of political ideologies, highlighting similar characteristics between Washington, Du Bois, Garvey and even later black power movements. These early glimpses of black community building, economic uplift and

emphasis on civil rights were an intrinsic element of a struggle that spanned several generations of activists.

## **Chapter Five**

### **The End of Macon's Black Fair:**

#### **Black Politics, Race Relations and the Negro Department at the**

#### **White State Fair, 1919-1929**

In 1919, the doors closed on Macon's black fair for the last time. Diverging interests among the black community present a reason as to why the fair was discontinued. The umbrella of a recreational event had helped obscure factions within the black community which later became more politically and ideologically divided. The black fair's use as a political and social tool came to an end when, during the 1920s, African Americans looked towards more overtly politicised associations. This chapter looks at how occupational and geographical splits at the fair deepened in the years leading up to and following the end of the event. While the agricultural and rural classes gave their support to Marcus Garvey, the black business classes fostered the initiatives of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which established branches in many southern states during the early 1920s. The black fair had therefore hinted at diverging black interests which were based on geographical and class stratifications, and following the end of the fair these were later polarised into political responses.

Another expression of the social fragmentation behind the fair's demise can be seen in rising white violence towards blacks in this period. Following the end of the black fair in 1919, the rise of the Ku Klux Klan marked a period of significant racial disruption and tension within Georgia and its local communities. The appearance of the Klan at the white state fair, for two consecutive years, demonstrates an organised white reaction to



the increased black activism of the early 1920s. It similarly stressed the white community's acceptance of the Klan's violent methods and racial supremacist ethos within society. As the decade progressed, community violence lessened as the Klan lost national and local power. The decrease in racial tensions was again translated through the medium of the white state fair, as the black community were invited for the first time in over twenty years to attend the event. In 1929 the white fair exhibited displays of black produce, needlework and educational work in a specially designated "Negro Department". The department allowed the African American community to attend, albeit only in a separate, segregated area demonstrating how the event was under white jurisdiction. Consequently, the "Negro Department" did not hint at or grant the same kind of social and economic power exhibited at earlier black fairs. This negative comparison between the "Negro Department" and the black fair reflected a more general decline in social, recreational and political autonomy for many African Americans. The contrast between the two, however, helps illustrate how radical the exhibits at the black fairs had been and how they had helped further the needs of Georgia's black community during the early twentieth century.

*The End of the Black Fair and the Rise of the NAACP and the UNIA*

Little information survives regarding the reasons why the event finished around this period, making conclusions about the closing of the fair problematic. Indeed, evidence is so elusive that the Digital Library of Georgia states that past 1916 "no information on this unique endeavour has been located".<sup>1</sup> Since the fair had existed for over a decade,

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<sup>1</sup> The Georgia State Fair 1886-1960, The Digital Library of Georgia,  
<http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/gastatefair/?Welcome> (accessed 02.04.11).

its end raises a number of questions, not only about why it finished but, significantly, why black interests, which had converged at the start of the fair in 1906, diverged thirteen years later. After eleven years of Richard Wright's management, the African American fair was taken over by members of Macon's black community. Contrary to the information in the Digital Library of Georgia, Wright did not leave the Macon fair in order to establish a bank in Philadelphia in 1921.<sup>2</sup> The contract for the white state fair ran for a ten-year period, suggesting that the contract for the black fair would have expired after a similar duration.<sup>3</sup> After working in conjunction with Macon's state fair for ten years, Wright chose to leave and work on establishing a similar state fair in his home city of Savannah in 1916.<sup>4</sup>

From 1917 onwards, then, the Macon fair was managed by Charles Douglass, Richard Hartley and Burl Ingram, Macon residents. A prominent businessman, Charles Douglass was the owner of Macon's black theatre;<sup>5</sup> Richard Harley was similarly well-known in Macon's black community and, during the period of the fair, he was Secretary-Treasurer of the Central City Undertaking Company, President of the Real Estate Corporation and

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1910. This explains why the black fair stopped in 1916 for a period of a year and then resumed. The legal documents for the white fair ran for a period of ten years, which suggests that the legal paperwork for the African American fair would have similarly expired after a ten-year period. Details for the length of the contract for the white fair can be found in the "Minutes of the Georgia State Fair Association 1909-1911, September 23<sup>rd</sup> 1910", 305, Georgia State Fair Association Collection, Washington Memorial Library, Macon, Box 11, Folder, 90A.

<sup>4</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1916.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Douglass and the Douglass Theatre are discussed at length in Chapter Three, pp.158-159.

Treasurer of the People's Health and Life Insurance Co;<sup>6</sup> and Burl Ingram was a prominent businessman and published author who had written the *Mathematical Dictionary: A Book of Practical and Accurate Short Rules and Methods for all Business Transactions*.<sup>7</sup> When the fair's management changed hands, the title of the event was altered to the Middle Georgia Colored Fair although it continued with similar arrangements with various schools, fraternal associations, guest speakers and horse, automobile and motorcycle races.<sup>8</sup> The fair was reportedly successful in these continuing years and, in 1918, the *Macon News* stressed that officials were "planning a greater one next year."<sup>9</sup>

There were signs, however, that interest in the fair was waning. In 1918, an international outbreak of influenza, combined with bad weather conditions, meant "hundreds were kept away," a drop in attendance which impacted the fair financially.<sup>10</sup> The following year, the only evidence which suggests that a black fair was held was an application by the Middle Georgia Colored Fair Association for the use of Central City Park on November 3-12, 1919, which was adopted by the Committee of Public Property.<sup>11</sup> It is not clear if this went ahead as there is no surviving press information on the fair. In

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<sup>6</sup>James Nelson Simms (ed.), *Simms' Blue Book and Negro Business and Professional Directory* (1923) on New York Public Library Digital Gallery, <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?1223164> (accessed 14.07.2007); *Macon Telegraph*, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1931.

<sup>7</sup> B. S. Ingram, *Mathematical Dictionary: A Book of Practical and Accurate Short Rules and Methods for all Business Transactions* (Macon, Georgia: J.W. Burke Co., 1925).

<sup>8</sup>*Macon News*, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1917; November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1917; November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1918.

<sup>9</sup>*Macon News*, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1918.

<sup>10</sup>*Macon News*, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1918.

<sup>11</sup> Macon City Council minutes, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1919, Washington Memorial Library, Macon, Georgia.

1920, there were no applications made by the Black Fair Association for the use of Central City Park.

Wider social changes could have had an impact on the fair. In November 1918, World War I ended, an event which created social changes on both a national and local level. Economic instability immediately following the end of the war, coupled with the loss of young black soldiers, which would have reduced collective family income, and the return of white male workers, resulted in a precarious job market for many black workers. The cost of 25 cents (translated as \$3.56 at today's prices) for a recreational event, plus any travel expenses, might have proved financially difficult for many black patrons.<sup>12</sup> Studies have also shown that wages in Georgia were significantly lower than average compared to other states.<sup>13</sup>

Strained black and white community relationships fuelled by soldiers returning from World War I would have made it hard to ensure peace at the event. Returning black soldiers, who had fought for democracy in Europe, were keen to speak out against the brutality they experienced within their own country and to agitate for civil rights. As the *Boston Guardian* declared, "The Huns of Georgia are far more menacing to Negroes

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<sup>12</sup> Lawrence H. Officer and Samuel H. Williamson, "Measuringworth", <http://www.measuringworth.com/index.html> (accessed 23.11.10).

<sup>13</sup> According to a survey of 217 farmers in Sumter County conducted in 1917, the income for an average family, consisting of father, mother and three working-age children, was forty-two dollars a month. Donald L. Grant, *The Way It Was in the South: The Black Experience in Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 141.

than the Huns of Germany.”<sup>14</sup> The demands for black civil rights resulted in a noticeable surge in violence directed towards returning black veterans, which created further instability in the South’s already volatile race relations. The “Red Summer” of 1919 marked the greatest wave of “terror and murder against blacks since the Klan put down Reconstruction fifty years earlier. Nationally, there were twenty-six urban race riots and more than seventy lynchings of which nearly a third were reported in Georgia”.<sup>15</sup> During 1919, W. Fitzhugh Brundage reports twenty-one African Americans lynched in Georgia.<sup>16</sup> Among them was Eugene Hamilton who, on the 7<sup>th</sup> October, was shot to death during daylight hours and found in Jasper County.<sup>17</sup> The event evidences the violence that African Americans experienced during this period and the *Galveston New Idea* declared that this “blood curdling dastardly savage deed [was] almost too brutal to print.”<sup>18</sup> Tensions were similarly high in Macon and a month later a Bibb County mob, estimated at around a thousand strong, lynched a man called Paul Booker for the alleged rape of a white woman. Akin to Hamilton’s murder Booker’s fate was equally brutal as his body was riddled with bullets, after which he was dragged 150 yards down a railroad track by his neck and then repeatedly set alight.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Thomas Kerlin, *The Voice of the Negro, 1919* (Boston, Massachusetts: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1920), 12.

<sup>15</sup> Grant, *The Way It Was*, 317.

<sup>16</sup> W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1959), Appendix A, 278-279.

<sup>17</sup> Kerlin, *The Voice of the Negro*, 108.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>19</sup> Manis, *Macon Black and White*, 61- 62.

Racial tensions within the community would have made staging the fair problematic as it required the support of whites. Despite the fact that the fair had originated during a time of racial conflict, both blacks and whites were able to embrace the event as there were mutual benefits offered by its accommodationist ideology. By 1919, the civic and political goals of the black community had subtly shifted as was evidenced not only by the demands of the returning black veterans but also by changes within the political field since the inception of the black fair. Booker T. Washington, the architect of accommodationist ideology, had passed away and political associations, such as the NAACP and the Universal Negro Improvement Agency (UNIA) which enjoyed its peak in 1920s, emerged in the push to agitate for black civil liberties.

The founding of the fair in the time of crisis in 1906 also seems to be critical to its end in 1919. The black fair responded to a social need; it was, therefore, shaped by its social context, a period of crisis following Atlanta's 1906 riot. There were considerable political and economic restrictions on African Americans which consequently limited black social mobility. The fair served the needs of the black middle class during 1906 and beyond as accommodationism promised to merge the economic interests of the farmers and the business community, in effect combining the interests of rural and urban black Georgians. The farmers at the fair were given lessons on scientific farming, seed and agricultural instruction by government contacts and connected with methods which helped to improve their crops. Prosperous black farmers benefited black urban businesses, in both the short term (at the fair) and long term as they provided customers, produce and revenue.

From 1906 to 1919, notable factions had appeared at the fair between strands of the business, agricultural and black labouring classes, which were indicative of underlying urban and rural divisions. Within the context of the black state fair such groups had temporarily merged as they considered themselves part of a black middle class; however they formed separate strands within that middle class. Underlying interests within the black middle class were highlighted at the fair as early as 1908 when, talking about his work as a field agent, Reverend Thomas expressed his hope that the fair would represent all black concerns. Thomas stated that he wanted to “co-operate with the Association in uniting, as far as possible, the farmers and business men and women in business lines.”<sup>20</sup> These strands split in the second decade of the twentieth century as rural agriculturalists and urban businessmen gave their support to different political organisations. Once these strands of the black community associated with particular political groups, they became increasingly polarised, splitting down ideological lines.

One of the reasons the black community looked towards more politicised options was because economic growth for both the agricultural and business classes was stunted by white racism and the accommodationist ideology promoted by Washington no longer appeared to be viable in promoting their needs. Economics had united black interests during the fair but now caused these groups to diverge and seek alternative political methods. Historian Steven Hahn’s research shows that groups of the UNIA and NAACP were split along the kind of occupational lines that had been blurred within the fair. The UNIA in the South consisted predominantly of labourers, whereas the NAACP was comprised of higher skilled workers, traditionally associated with more urban areas. In *Black Moses*, Edmund David Cronon states that “up to this time no Negro organization

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<sup>20</sup>*Savannah Tribune*, February, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1908.

had either seriously attempted or succeeded in the organization of the Negro masses.” Cronon emphasises that “none of the racial improvement groups, such as the National Urban League or the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, had directed much attention to the lower-class Negroes, but had instead depended upon the upper classes, both white and Negro, for intellectual and financial support. This was a basic weakness that tended to separate the bulk of the colored population from its leadership, and the unfortunate result was that Negroes were denied any effective racial organization.”<sup>21</sup>

There are no available membership lists for the NAACP in Macon, Georgia, and the UNIA did not have a branch situated around that area. The most concise information comparing the demographics of the two associations comes from the membership rolls of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, as analysed by Steven Hahn. In 1910 Baton Rouge had a sizable black population, which was similar to that of Macon: it had a total of 30,565 blacks while Bibb County similarly contained around 27,481.<sup>22</sup> Hahn demonstrates that in Baton Rouge 54.2 per cent of NAACP members were classed as skilled or semi-skilled workers compared to 33.3 per cent in the UNIA. The highest percentage of UNIA members were classified as labourers (50 per cent) compared to only 15.3 per cent in the NAACP. Interestingly, Hahn notes that there were more educators in the UNIA, with 8.3 per cent, yet only 5.1 per cent were classified as such in the

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<sup>21</sup> E. David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Agency* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 37.

<sup>22</sup> The states themselves had different sized populations of African Americans, with Georgia leading with a total number of 1,176,987 African Americans, compared to Louisiana which had 713,874. “1910 Historical Census”, University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/county.php> (accessed 28.07.11).



membership of the NAACP. No members were classified as having professional or religious occupations in the UNIA whereas in the NAACP they constituted 6.7 per cent and 5.1 per cent respectively.<sup>23</sup> Such figures can be difficult to quantify as many religious figures also operated as educators and vice-versa. Nonetheless, Hahn's figures illustrate how political membership was, to an extent, determined by occupation and likewise how jobs were geographically linked with urban and rural areas in the South.

As Hahn demonstrates, occupational lines within the organisations were not rigid and NAACP charter applications from counties in Georgia in 1919 reveal that, similar to Louisiana, the occupations of intended members varied from county to county and included a mixture of farmers and professionals. In Dublin and Milledgeville many of the applicants were farmers. In Rome during 1918 there were 118 founding members of that division of the NAACP, though only a few of its members were farmers. In 1921 in Social Circle, there was a mixed membership with some farmers and other town professionals. During a similar period in Thomasville, there were a few farmers though many more town professionals, while Valdosta's chapter had a couple of members who classified themselves as farmers.<sup>24</sup> The occupational breakdown of the NAACP in Macon and Georgia at large is therefore difficult to quantify conclusively, though this data and the town's large black professional base, which appeared at the fair, would suggest that many members would have similarly considered themselves to be part of this black business class.

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<sup>23</sup> Steven Hahn, *The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), Appendix Table 5, 171.

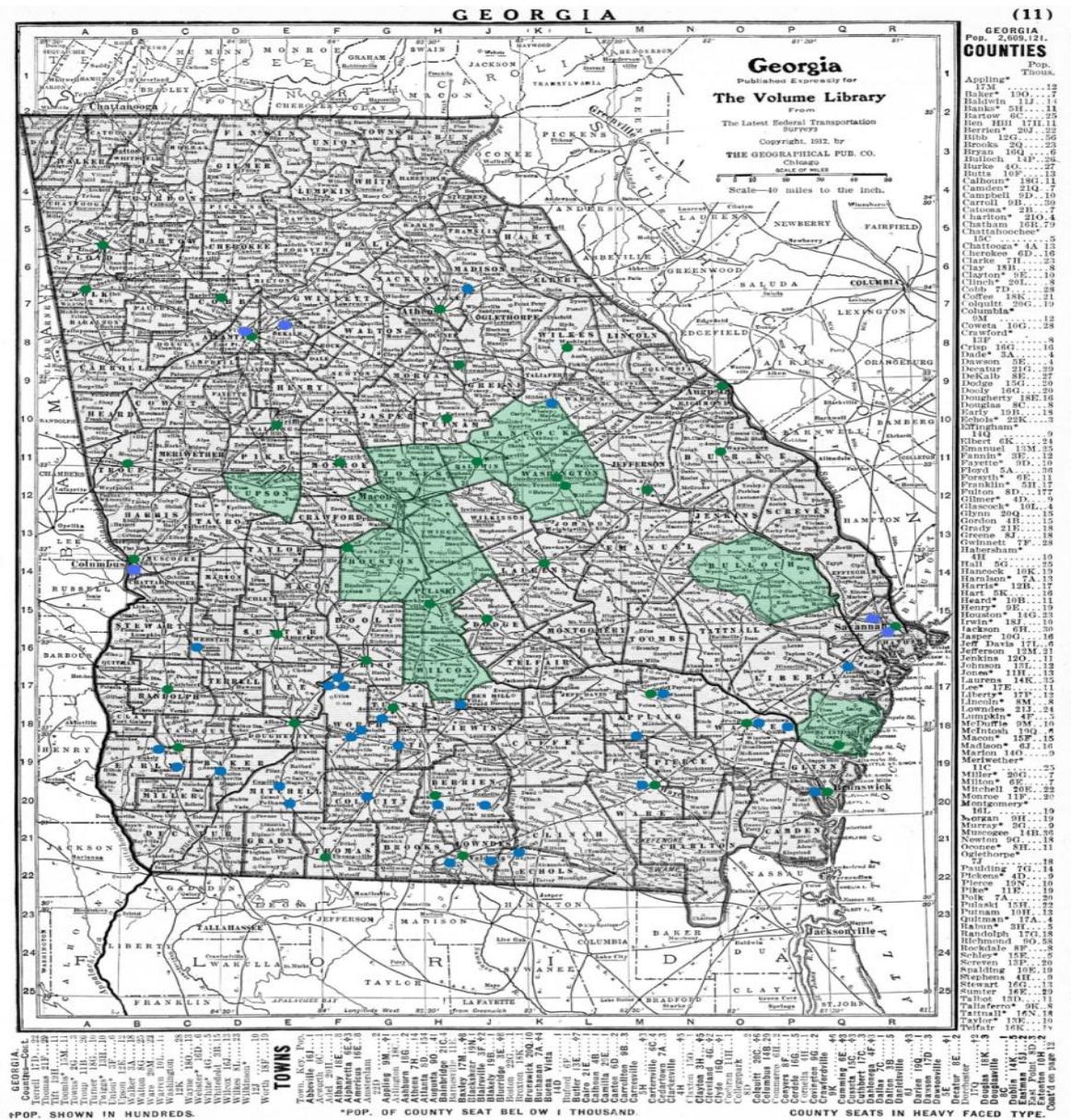
<sup>24</sup> Notes by Jarod Roll on NAACP, Southern Branches, Part 1, 1919-1939, Series G: Branch Files, Container 46, Numbers 1-6 F. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

An overlap of agricultural labouring interests and the UNIA in Georgia can be seen by pin-pointing the counties from which the fair received agricultural exhibits and comparing them to the places where the UNIA gained branches during the 1920s. Map 1 indicates from where, in 1909, the fair organisers received agricultural exhibits. The counties which the fair organisers referred to are highlighted in green and the specific towns are dotted in green while the UNIA branches are marked in blue. The blue dots indicate UNIA branches and their location supports Mary Rolinson's argument that black support for Garvey's UNIA, was more widespread in smaller Southern agricultural communities during this period.<sup>25</sup> There were, however, many branches of the UNIA throughout the southern counties of Georgia, based in the Wiregrass region, named after its distinctive fauna.<sup>26</sup> The map hints at links between the areas which sent agricultural exhibits and the places where the UNIA branches formed ten years later. They do not show a definite pattern but do give an indication of the overlap between agricultural communities involved with the venture of the state fair and later UNIA divisions. Out of the 36 agricultural exhibits and 34 UNIA divisions, there were overlaps within eleven counties. In Berrien, Muskogee, Fulton, Chatham, Lowndes, Ware, Appling, Wayne, Early, Turner and Glynn counties, the map shows that there were agricultural exhibits sent from farmers from these counties, places where divisions of the UNIA later developed. This meant that approximately one third of exhibits came from areas whose agricultural communities later embraced the tenets of Garveyism.

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<sup>25</sup> Mary G. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Rural South, 1920-1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 165.

<sup>26</sup> City Map of Georgia with geographical regions in John Dittmer, *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era 1900-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 4.

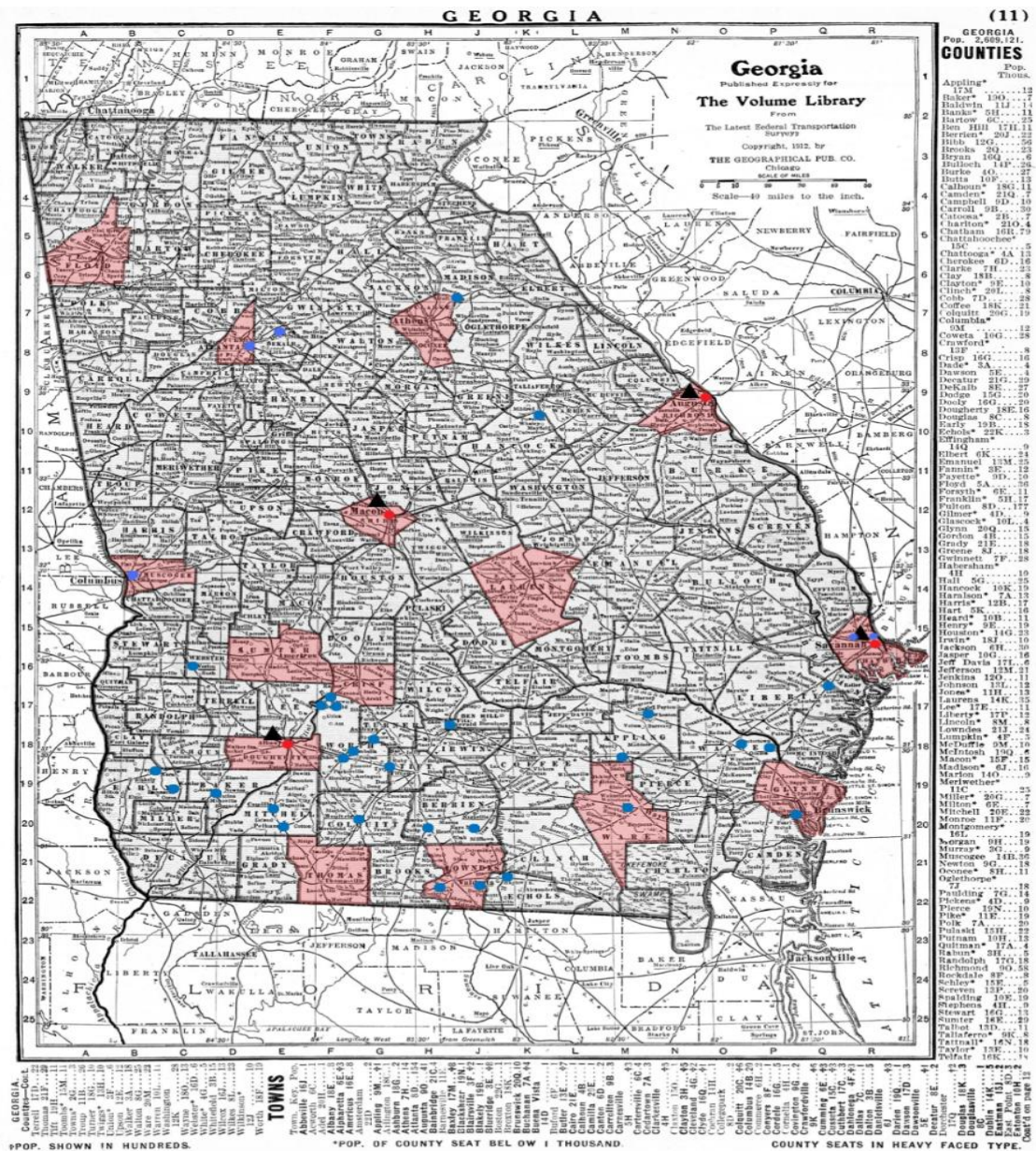


Georgia, 1912  
Henry W. Ruoff, *The Volume Library* (Chicago, IL: The W. E. Richardson Company, 1912)  
Downloaded from *Maps ETC*, on the web at <http://etc.usf.edu/maps> [map #03071]

7. Map 1 illustrates the Counties and towns whose agricultural exhibits contributed towards the 1909 black State Fair indicated by green dots and shading compared with the UNIA branches in Georgia, 1920 to 1927.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Information provided by Dr Jarod Roll and compiled from a list of UNIA divisions in the rural South, by state, county and town. Taken from Robert Hill (ed.), *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* Vol. 7 and Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 197-215. Information is also gathered from Rolinson's recent chapter, "The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Georgia: Southern Strongholds of Garveyism" in John C. Inscoe (ed.), *Georgia in Black and White*:





Georgia, 1912

Henry W. Ruoff, *The Volume Library* (Chicago, IL: The W. E. Richardson Company, 1912)

Downloaded from *Maps ETC.*, on the web at <http://etc.usf.edu/maps> [map #03071]

8. Map 2 shows the NAACP Branches, State Fairs locations and UNIA branches in Georgia.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the black fair's promotion of many aspects pertinent to Garveyism, the town of Macon did not foster any UNIA initiatives.<sup>28</sup> Map 2 demonstrates how and where these organisations were geographically located and the red dots show that the NAACP was located in many of Georgia's urban centres. The map demonstrates that, while there were NAACP initiatives in Macon, Albany and Augusta. There were no UNIA divisions in these areas and the map shows that there were none in any surrounding counties. This illustrates a geographical split between pockets of support, as the NAACP was located in urban centres and the UNIA initiatives were situated in rural communities. The NAACP was more prevalent in towns where African Americans were

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<sup>28</sup> This is discussed in Chapter Four from p.198 onwards; Roll's compiled list of UNIA divisions in the rural South, by state, county and town. There is, however, a discrepancy between Roll and Rolinson who, additionally, includes Atlanta, Decatur, Columbus, Savannah and Pooler in "The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Georgia: Southern Strongholds of Garveyism", 221. If we cross reference these with Roll's compilation that would then make 35 divisions of the UNIA in Georgia instead of 34 chapters cited by Rolinson or the 28 cited referenced by Roll. Roll includes Warwick in his list whereas Rolinson omits this division. I have relied on Mary Rolinson's conclusions throughout the chapter as information comparing UNIA and NAACP chapters in Georgia is scarce. Rolinson's work is also the most recent and thoroughly documented on Georgia's divisions of the UNIA and the NAACP. Similarly Macon's local branch of the NAACP cannot offer any membership lists, which makes it difficult to draw direct evidence. I have also searched among Macon's local newspapers for information on both the UNIA and NAACP. They again offer little information as they predominantly relate to Macon's NAACP chapter in the 1940s. Macon's Washington Memorial library similarly contains no evidence on the NAACP or surrounding UNIA divisions in these early years and the branch materials are not listed on line. Atlanta's NAACP branch materials are available from 1913 onwards, though they do not directly pertain to Macon's branch; John H. Bracey, Jr, and August Meier, "Papers of the NAACP, Selected Branch Files 1913-1939: Part 12, Series A: The South",

[http://academic.lexisnexis.com/documents/upa\\_cis/1424\\_PapersNAACPPart12SerA.pdf](http://academic.lexisnexis.com/documents/upa_cis/1424_PapersNAACPPart12SerA.pdf)

(Bethesda, Maryland: University Publications of America, 1991), P.17-18 (accessed 26.07.11).

more closely connected to white residents by work and physical proximity, creating a necessity for them to get along with the white community in which they operated. The overarching goal of the NAACP was for blacks to compete equally with whites within an economic market which appealed to a black business class. The racial separatism and back-to-Africa sentiment advocated by Marcus Garvey had little appeal as it was neither economically viable nor compatible with a business ethos.

This split was also ideological as both the NAACP and Garvey were at odds with the other's policies and goals.<sup>29</sup> They regularly denounced each other in speeches and press statements: for example, in 1922, Garvey lambasted his detractors as “cheap, villainous parasitic members of my race who tried to discredit me because the Universal has made an inroad into their scheme of exploiting the people.” In this category of exploiters, he included “several Negro organizations and a goodly number of preachers and politicians”.<sup>30</sup>

The places where the black state fairs were held overlapped with the divisions of the NAACP and, in Map 2, the black triangles indicate that the locations where black fairs were formed in the early twentieth century were also home to divisions of the NAACP, as indicated by the red dots. During this period, all of the cities, which had previously hosted state fairs, including Macon, Albany, Augusta and Savannah, were also places in which the NAACP created new divisions. By the 1920s, the NAACP had established over seventeen divisions in Georgia including, Americus, Athens, Atlanta, Brunswick,

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<sup>29</sup> Elliot M. Rudwick “DuBois Versus Garvey: Race Propagandists at War”, *Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Fall, 1959), 421-431.

<sup>30</sup> *Chicago Defender*, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1922.

Columbus, Cordele, Dublin, Hawkinsville, Milledgeville, Rome, Valdosta and Waycross, on Map 2 these areas are shaded in red.<sup>31</sup> The cities where the NAACP had branches in Georgia tend to correspond with Rolinson's assertion that the NAACP thrived in communities where a "sizable black professional class existed," the sector which had been responsible for starting the projects of the black fair.<sup>32</sup> In 1923, for example, Macon had eight practising black physicians, including one specialist, three black dentists, and two black lawyers.<sup>33</sup> Those involved with the black state fair shared similar professions to local leaders of the NAACP, coming "from the ranks of teachers, businessmen, physicians, and clergymen" although their local activities promoted the welfare of all classes of black people.<sup>34</sup> When James Weldon Johnson visited the South in an attempt to gain support and establish southern branches of the NAACP, he focused on Savannah, Macon and Augusta as places in which to launch southern NAACP branches. His choice could have arisen from the large population numbers, which would have been equally necessary to support a fair. It also indicates that Johnson expected there to be a strong base on which to found these fledgling branches, although no evidence is available to suggest that Johnson had any contact with the organisers of the black fairs.<sup>35</sup> Johnson's focus on these towns suggests that the black fairs, along with other institutions, had also helped to attract national attention towards the activities of

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<sup>31</sup> Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 245.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>33</sup> Davis George Anderson, "A City Comes of Age: An Urban Study of Macon During the 1920's", (Master's Thesis, Georgia College, Milledgeville, 1975), 91.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Andrew M. Manis, *Macon: Black and White, An Unutterable Separation in the American Century* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press and Tubman African American Museum, 2004), 143.

the African American community, which paved the way for the introduction of more politicised organisations.

Many of these early branches of the NAACP were short-lived and the date of this first attempt to establish the NAACP in Macon is difficult to pinpoint. In fact, the NAACP in Macon only chartered in 1956, during the second attempt to establish a branch in the city.<sup>36</sup> Andrew Manis places the first attempt in 1917.<sup>37</sup> This conflicts with an interview with Frank Hutching Snr., the president of the first NAACP, who states that it was in 1923 that the organisation made its first attempt to establish a local chapter in Macon, working towards trying to secure jobs for blacks and restore the right to vote.<sup>38</sup> Both dates fit in a timeframe given by Mary Rolinson, who argues that myriad NAACP divisions were initiated throughout Georgia from 1917-1930.<sup>39</sup>

Connecting NAACP membership to specific members of Macon's black community is equally difficult. A representative at the NAACP headquarters in Baltimore stated that these early, unsuccessful, attempts were often uncharted, therefore any membership lists would be difficult to locate, if even there were some in existence.<sup>40</sup> Members were often unwilling to make their affiliation with the association known due to the NAACP's reputation for being radical and, amongst whites, the "integrationist organization was most unwelcome in many areas in Georgia."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Telephone conversation with David Brooker, President of the Macon NAACP branch, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

<sup>37</sup> Manis, *Macon: Black and White*, 143.

<sup>38</sup> "Heritage: A Portrait Of Macon's Blacks", *Macon Telegraph*, February 18<sup>th</sup>, 1979, 5.

<sup>39</sup> Rolinson, "The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Georgia", 202.

<sup>40</sup> Telephone conversation with Yutiz Stassord of the NAACP Baltimore Headquarters, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

<sup>41</sup> Rolinson, "The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Georgia", 210.



Likewise, it is surprisingly difficult to get an impression of the NAACP from African American newspapers in Georgia in the years before 1930. The organisation, however, received considerable coverage during their 1920 conference which was held in Atlanta, a choice of venue which, according to the *New York Times*, was “startling to say the least”.<sup>42</sup> A statement released by the NAACP revealed that they hoped the conference would help contribute to “a better understanding among white people of the aspirations of Negro citizens and to clearing the way for the elimination of the causes of race friction.”<sup>43</sup> Public relations expert Edward Bernays was asked to handle publicity for the convention and he, and his future wife, Doris Fleischman, went to Atlanta to persuade Georgia's elected officials to attend the conference and show their support. While there, Fleischman was threatened by the people opposed to “Negro rights” and found that many of Atlanta’s politicians were disconcerted by the venture, evidenced by the rumours that the governor, Hugh M. Dorsey, would have preferred to go duck hunting instead of attending the conference. The atmosphere in Atlanta was fraught and there were repeated threats of violence against the black community. As a result, Georgia’s militia was put on standby. Nonetheless, the conference continued without incident and concluded with delegates sending a copy of their objectives to President Woodrow Wilson and to Congress. There was substantial media coverage and Atlanta's newspapers, *The New York Globe*, *The Evening Post*, *The Chicago Daily* and others carried stories about the meeting and a feature outlining “[the] progress made by

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<sup>42</sup>“Edward L. Bernays”, The Museum of Public Relations, New York,

[http://www.prmuseum.com/bernays/bernays\\_1920.html](http://www.prmuseum.com/bernays/bernays_1920.html) (accessed 14. 05.11).

<sup>43</sup>*Chicago Defender*, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1920.

Negroes from the plantation labor to business and the professions."<sup>44</sup> The event demonstrated the aspirations of the NAACP and their willingness to work with white authorities; it similarly brought to the forefront the violent reactions and opposition that Georgia's white community felt towards the association.

Other newspaper reports on the NAACP's activities in Georgia do not start to appear in publications such as the *Chicago Defender*, *Negro Star* and *Savannah Tribune* until the early 1930s. In 1931, for example, the *Afro-American* reported on the visit of Walter White, Secretary of the NAACP, to the South following the death of two women which, White stated, showed the "race segregation in the South... in all its brutal ugliness by the willingness to let cultured, respected and leading colored women die for lack of hospital facilities which are available to any white person no matter how low in the social scale."<sup>45</sup> Again, without the membership lists from Macon, it is difficult to gather a sense of how the association was received by the black community at a grassroots level.

As with the NAACP, the activities of the UNIA do not appear to have been reported much in Georgia's black newspapers during this period. When the *Savannah Tribune* did mention Garvey, the tone was overwhelmingly negative. For instance, in 1920, after a New York African Convention, the newspaper stated that should Garvey's words "prove to be nothing more than the mere vaporings of an adventurer who is preying on the already distracted nerves of a group who are beginning to acutely feel the social and economic wrongs of their kind, why then he will sink back into that oblivion". This was

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<sup>44</sup>"Edward L. Bernays", The Museum of Public Relations, New York,

[http://www.prmuseum.com/bernays/bernays\\_1920.html](http://www.prmuseum.com/bernays/bernays_1920.html) (accessed 14. 05.11).

<sup>45</sup>*Afro- American*, December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1931.

an opinion, they stated, which was shared by “many of the more intelligent Negroes in the city of New York.”<sup>46</sup>

The newspapers’ lack of enthusiasm for Garvey continued and, during 1921 and 1922, examples of headlines included: “Marcus Garvey, head black star line, Arrested Charged [with] Fraudulent Representation”,<sup>47</sup> “United States Grand Jury Indicts Marcus Garvey”<sup>48</sup> and “Marcus Garvey given Severe Rebuke”.<sup>49</sup> At the end of 1922, the *Savannah Tribune* stated that Garvey had “at last been convinced of his unfitness for leadership”.<sup>50</sup> Mary Rolinson confirms that, during 1922, the *Savannah Tribune*, “under editor Sol C. Johnson, [which] usually ignored UNIA activity altogether, found space to condemn Garvey.”<sup>51</sup> Despite Johnson having no public affiliation with the NAACP during this period, his critique can be taken as evidence of the divisive opinion that Garvey created within sectors of the black middle class.<sup>52</sup>

The involvement of rural farmers and urban black businessmen in the black fair, however, demonstrates how lines of class and political support were not absolute. As Hahn’s earlier statistics demonstrate, Garveyism has often been recognised as an ideology which appealed to a specific farming or labouring class of African American

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<sup>46</sup>*Savannah Tribune*, August 21<sup>st</sup>, 1920.

<sup>47</sup>*Savannah Tribune*, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1922.

<sup>48</sup>*Savannah Tribune*, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1922.

<sup>49</sup>*Savannah Tribune*, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1922.

<sup>50</sup>*Savannah Tribune*, November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1922.

<sup>51</sup> Rolinson, “The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Georgia”, 213.

<sup>52</sup> Johnson was a well-known member of the Masons and patron of the Order of the Eastern Star. Obituary in *Jet*, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1954, 25.

community. Although Garvey did gain support from many lower classes and rural areas, more so than the NAACP, this did not mean that ideological splits were completely determined by class or affluence. Map 2 demonstrates rural farmers' contributions to the black fair from areas which later hosted UNIA branches. The black fair was considered to be a middle class venture and, in order to raise the revenue to visit farmers would have had to have surplus funds in order to attend. The connection between the black fair and rural agricultural communities suggests that farmers in these areas considered themselves to be part of a middle class bracket or sought to involve themselves with middle class ventures. There has been much debate about the class composition of members of the UNIA, with some historians such as Theodore Vincent and Judith Stein acknowledging that sectors of the UNIA leadership were stamped by the "immediate purposes of a more middling strata" of the black community.<sup>53</sup> Mary Rolinson states that while there was no doubt that "many younger Garvey sympathizers moved north to escape debt peonage, older men, particularly those with families, could not move easily and sought to build an economic foundation and race dignity where they lived."<sup>54</sup> The financial obligations of these men, therefore, questions the extent to which Garvey's "Back to Africa" message was a realistic option for many of his supporters, instead highlighting that principles of black pride, economics and racial dignity were more practical aspects of the UNIA for its followers who wanted to elevate themselves.

Savannah is an example of an area where a state fair was held and also where aspects of Garveyism and the NAACP converged. Savannah's branch of the NAACP was set up

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<sup>53</sup> Theodore G. Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement* (Baltimore, Maryland: Black Classic Press, 2006); Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), 275.

<sup>54</sup> Rolinson, "The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Georgia", 205.

during 1917.<sup>55</sup> Map 2 demonstrates the town was host to a division of the UNIA, with another one close by in Pooler, highlighting that the *Savannah Tribune*'s antipathy towards Garvey was not shared by all of Savannah residents. Similarly, even though Macon did not host a branch of the UNIA, some black Maconites did show support for Garvey and, following his criminal conviction, letters and contributions for his cause came from Macon.<sup>56</sup> The duality of political support in both urban centres demonstrates that regional support was not necessarily confined to a specific political ideology. Savannah and Macon were large towns where the black population was large enough to support both organisations. Mary Rolinson notes that this was not the case in smaller areas and then even though "black farmers may have split between the organizations and, in some cases, supported both," it was "ultimately the predisposition of local whites [which] seemed to determine which organization would have been most successful. Judging from discussions at NAACP conventions, the integrationist organization was most unwelcome in many areas in Georgia."<sup>57</sup> Rolinson stresses that this hostility towards the NAACP helps explain why the UNIA prospered in rural areas in South Georgia where the NAACP had not organized and did not have white support.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Charles Lwanga Hoskins, "A Hard Road to Freedom: The NAACP in Savannah", NAACP, Savannah, GA, [http://www.savnaacp.com/NAACP\\_SAVANNAH/Welcome.html](http://www.savnaacp.com/NAACP_SAVANNAH/Welcome.html) (accessed 6.06.11).

<sup>56</sup> Rolinson, "The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Georgia", 217.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 210.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 210.

*The Ku Klux Klan at Georgia's White State Fair, 1925 and 1926*

During and after this period of increased black political activism the Ku Klux Klan re-emerged in Macon. Chronologically this is significant as the Klan demonstrated a collective white, violent reaction towards overt displays of black political mobilisation. It is telling that the endeavour of the black fair was discontinued around the time that the Klan gained prominence and support within Macon and Georgia as a whole. It is indicative of a harsher and more violent attitude adopted by members of Macon's white community, which meant that whites were less open towards bi-racial ventures or racial negotiations than they had been previously. The Klan's appearance at Georgia's white state fair was similarly evidence of their wider power and influence within the state during this period. This public and communal display at the fair was also indicative of the group's acceptance by the white community.

The relationship between black activism and white supremacist associations can be seen in that, while the Klan grew in strength, the Macon branch of the NAACP went into decline. Hutchings confirmed that the reason for the NAACP's decline in this early period was because "black people were afraid of losing their jobs, [so] they wouldn't join the NAACP."<sup>59</sup> This statement highlights the economic influence of whites over the black community and how that influence translated into social and political control. Hutchings saw the irony of the situation as there was a pressing need for the organization due to the increased local activity of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>60</sup> A conversation with the president of Macon's NAACP branch reveals that they are reluctant to divulge

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<sup>59</sup>"Heritage: A Portrait Of Macon's Blacks", *Macon Telegraph*, February 18<sup>th</sup>, 1979, 5.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

information on any members, past or current, as there has been harassment and intimidation directed towards family members up to the present day.<sup>61</sup>

Garvey's politics did not provoke such an extreme reaction from white racist groups. Indeed, Jarod Roll has noted how, in 1922 and 1923, in Missouri's Bootheel region, the Klan and the UNIA had "goals and assets that were mutually beneficial. Bootheel Klan members controlled large areas of land and wielded considerable political power, thereby possessing the means to repress poor whites, while the UNIA included members who were the most successful cotton farmers".<sup>62</sup> Ideologically, Garvey's rhetoric of racial separatism and racial purity, appealed to many white extremists and Garvey himself applauded groups such as the Klan and the Anglo Saxon Clubs for "their honesty and lack of hypocrisy" in their treatment of the black community.<sup>63</sup> Garvey's divisive attitude was again on display when, in 1922, he amicably met with the acting imperial wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, Edward Young Clarke.<sup>64</sup> Controversially, in November 1922, Garvey used the recreational forum of the North Carolina State Fair to thank publicly "the white man for beating and lynching race consciousness into black people". He further added that, "Negroes in the South... had never produced or organized anything thus he had to ride on a white man's railways to get to North

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<sup>61</sup> Telephone conversation with David Brooker, President of the NAACP.

<sup>62</sup> Jarod Roll, *Spirit of Rebellion: Labor and Religion in the New Cotton South* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 70-71.

<sup>63</sup> Cronon, *Black Moses*, 188,190-1.

<sup>64</sup> Amy Jacques Garvey and Marcus Garvey, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or Africa for the the Africans, Volume 1* (Dover, Massachusetts: The Majority Press, 1986), 260.

Carolina. If he had had to depend on blacks to get him there, it would have taken six weeks.”<sup>65</sup>

The Hooded Empire’s influence had been steadily increasing in Georgia since 1915 when preacher William Simmons had reconstituted the Klan. Riding on the success of D. W. Griffith’s film *Birth of a Nation*, Simmons had pledged a new fraternal organisation which was committed to “100 per cent Americanism and the supremacy of the Caucasian race.”<sup>66</sup> The Klan’s rise began in 1921 and, by 1923 it had reached its peak with a membership of around 20,000.<sup>67</sup> This relationship between Georgia and the Klan was highlighted in 1924 when W. E. B. Du Bois claimed that Georgia was the “Invisible Empire State”.<sup>68</sup> The Klan formed a significant part of Macon society; the *Macon Telegraph* estimated that the local chapter consisted of 300 members.<sup>69</sup> Many white, middle-class professionals were included in its ranks, the very same group which had lent their support to the venture of the fair in 1906. Confirming the exact names of members is difficult as the membership lists are not available for Macon during this period but newspaper reports indicate that many members were white collar professionals. The reported leader of the Klan, Dr. C. A. Yarbrough, was a dentist and

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<sup>65</sup> Rolinson, “The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Georgia”, 208.

<sup>66</sup> David Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1981), 30.

<sup>67</sup> *New York Times*, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1926.

<sup>68</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, “Georgia: Invisible Empire State” in Ernest Gruening (ed.), *These United States*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vol., (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924), 2: 322-45.

<sup>69</sup> Statistics quoted from *Macon Telegraph*, September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1923 cited in Roger Hux Kent, “The Ku Klux Klan. in Macon, 1922-1925” (Master’s Thesis, University of Georgia, 1972), 12.



his attorney, John P. Ross, also admitted his affiliation with the Klan.<sup>70</sup> Yarbrough later went on trial because of his connection to the Klan and its violent crimes against white citizens for “moral” infractions such as the flogging of Lynwood Bright, who received a severe “horse whipping”, in front of his married female companion, Mrs Fredericka Pace, as punishment for adultery.<sup>71</sup> During Yarbrough’s trial many of his character witnesses had similar occupations ranging from travelling salesmen to solicitors and were also assumed to be members of the Macon Klan.<sup>72</sup>

The ending of the 1919 black fair and the appearance of the Klan at two of Georgia’s white state fairs demonstrate the violence of race relations in Macon between 1919 and 1926. Public condemnation of the Klan was only heard when their violence impinged on white society. Indeed, the brief references made to the lynching of black citizens were often placed towards the bottom of newspaper articles. When examining the Ku Klux Klan in Macon, Roger Hux Kent has argued that “although the Macon Klan was urban, it did not have the strong nativist and racist motivations which Kenneth Jackson attributed to other urban Klans.”<sup>73</sup> This statement is basically inaccurate. Despite various newspapers’ focus on the lynching of white men, there is ample evidence of racially motivated floggings and killings perpetrated by the Klan in Macon. In 1923 alone, there were several brutal floggings and subsequent deaths of African Americans linked to the Klan. In August, in relation to the Klan’s Yarbrough case, the *New York Times* declared that, “Detectives are criticised for taking a negro from Macon and

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<sup>70</sup>*Atlanta Constitution*, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1923.

<sup>71</sup>*Miami News*, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1923.

<sup>72</sup> The travelling salesman in question was J. E. Bloodsworth who worked for the I. Kessler commission company, *New York Times*, September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1923; *Atlanta Constitution*, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1923.

<sup>73</sup> Hux Kent, “The Ku Klux Klan in Macon, 1922-1925”, 65.

permitting him to be captured by a mob that strung him to a tree at Wellston.”<sup>74</sup> Likewise, in August, Charles Mike, an African American truck driver, narrowly escaped when five men attempted to stop him with the purpose of whipping him.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, when the Hudson brothers, who were arrested in connection with the floggings, were apprehended, the newspaper headline declared that they “were struggling with a negro when the Sheriff’s force ran them down on the highway.”<sup>76</sup> Another article briefly referred to a gang who had “lynched two negroes in middle Georgia during the last week.”<sup>77</sup> Other articles note similar events: Klan members broke into Milledgeville’s State Training School for Boys and flogged African American attendant, Jim Douglas, while demanding to know the whereabouts of other black attendants. During the raid, one black inmate committed suicide because of the extreme fear the Klan provoked in black citizens.<sup>78</sup>

These snippets of information give powerful testimony of white violence against blacks; they also reveal that such violence towards blacks was commonplace or accepted and did not warrant much attention or indignation. This again contradicts claims made by Hux Kent who stressed that there was no need for the Klan to regulate Macon’s African American population, due in part to the success of the “various laws designed to segregate blacks and restrict their civic participation” which “had proven effective”.<sup>79</sup> This view seems naive as success in enforcing such laws also implies a high level of

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<sup>74</sup>*New York Times*, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1923.

<sup>75</sup>*New York Times*, August 21<sup>st</sup>, 1923.

<sup>76</sup>*Atlanta Constitution*, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1923.

<sup>77</sup>*New York Times*, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1923.

<sup>78</sup>*Atlanta Constitution*, September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1923.

<sup>79</sup> Hux Kent, “The Ku Klux Klan in Macon, 1922-1925”, 65.

white dominance in order to make them effective. Many members of Macon's law enforcement, in addition to governmental officials, were members of the Klan. Sheriff Hicks himself concurred, stating that, "practically his entire force were or had been members of the Ku Klux Klan", illustrating how pervasive Klan memberships were, even within Macon's legal authorities.<sup>80</sup>

The Klan's appearance at the white state fair in 1925 and 1926 demonstrates how the Hooded Empire was deemed respectable enough to be allowed at a family-orientated event such as the fair illustrating the group's acceptance within the white community. During this period, the Klan appeared at other fairs such as Michigan's State Fair in Detroit in 1920,<sup>81</sup> the East Tennessee Division of the State Fair in Knoxville, 1923,<sup>82</sup> and during the same year at the Texas State Fair in Dallas.<sup>83</sup> In 1925, the Georgia State Fair followed suit, designating Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> October "Klan Day". The day consisted of a "novel program" which featured drills and open air exercises starting at 8pm.<sup>84</sup> This program was described as follows by the *Macon Telegraph*: "Led by a fiery cross fifteen feet high, composed of hundreds of electric lights, and mounted on a truck the white robed figures marched around the race track to a position in front of the

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<sup>80</sup>*Atlanta Constitution*, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1923.

<sup>81</sup>"Ku Klux Klan at the State Fair Grounds 1920s", Wayne State University, *Virtual Motor City Collection* (Detroit News)[http://dlxs.lib.wayne.edu/cgi/i/image/image-idx?id=S-VMC-X-41359-UND-1%5D41359\\_1](http://dlxs.lib.wayne.edu/cgi/i/image/image-idx?id=S-VMC-X-41359-UND-1%5D41359_1) (accessed 03-04-10).

<sup>82</sup>Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (Chicago: Ivan.R. Dee, 1992), 61.

<sup>83</sup>Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 96.

<sup>84</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1925. Kamelia refers to the women's chapter of the Klan established in 1923. For more information, refer to Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of The Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1992).

grandstand. In a hollow square formed by the robed and hooded Klansmen, the drill team of the Macon Kouncil staged a short drill. This was followed by a drill by Kamelias, also in white robes and hoods. Afterwards, the band played 'Nearer My God to Thee' and one of the Kamelias danced, illustrating the words of the hymn in pantomime. The seated figures of the Klansmen formed a square around the dancer."<sup>85</sup> This scene would have reinforced the ritualistic nature of the Klan, presenting it as a fraternal and social order. The inclusion of a hymn, furthermore, served to imbue the tableau with a sense of pseudo religious morality. Although the attendance figures did not quite match the 75,000 crowd present at the Dallas State Fair, the *Telegraph* estimated that close to 2,000 Klansmen took part in the exhibition drill and over 10,000 people were at the fairgrounds.<sup>86</sup> From these numbers, compared to Macon's own branch membership of 300, we can assume that the drill consisted of Klansmen from other counties and states.

The stance of the community or, indeed, the *Macon Telegraph* itself towards the Klan is difficult to gauge from the description. In 1923, the newspaper had previously castigated the mob activity of the Klan for impinging the "safety of person and human liberty" which were "guaranteed under the Constitution."<sup>87</sup> Just two years later, however, the paper reported extensively on the details of Klan Day, while rival newspaper the *Macon News* chose to provide only scant details of the day. This, combined with the newspaper's support of Governor Clifford Walker, who had

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<sup>85</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1925.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup>*Macon Telegraph* editorial reported in *New York Times*, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1923.

affiliations with the Klan, demonstrated a mixed reaction to the Klan.<sup>88</sup> The *Telegraph's* use of specific Klan terminology, such as “Kouncil” and “Kamelias”, indicates the extent to which the newspaper assumed the local community would be familiar with the dealings of the Klan, providing an indication of its ubiquity within Georgia’s society.

The Klan depended on entertainment to create a family feeling around the display of white supremacy. “Klan Day” used pyrotechnics in order to draw the crowds and publicise their designated day. For a fee of \$315, an Ohio company, Tipp / M&S Fireworks Company, was employed to put on a special fireworks show.<sup>89</sup> The northern-based business specialised in Klan-orientated entertainment, which shows a more widespread demand and testifies to the pervasiveness of the Klan celebrations throughout the United States during this period. For the occasion, State Fair organisers chose the Klan display and requested that the “bust of Lincoln..... be substituted with that of General Forrest, head of the Klan.”<sup>90</sup> Abraham Lincoln was considered to be a “traitor” to the South after he issued the emancipation proclamation. The organisers’ desire not to display Lincoln’s bust explicitly connected the racial ethos of the Klan to the memory of the Confederacy.

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<sup>88</sup> Manis, *Macon in Black and White*, 106.

<sup>89</sup> From The Tipp Fireworks Company, Tippecanoe City, Ohio to Secretary of the Georgia State Exposition, Macon, Ga, October 15<sup>th</sup> 1926, State Fair Association Records, Invoices and Receipts, 1926, Washington Memorial Library, Macon, Box 11, Folder 78b. The organisers were unable to get the desired bust of General Forrest but were instead given a “Miracle Star” in lieu of Lincoln.

<sup>90</sup> From the secretary/ manager of Georgia State Exposition to the M&S fireworks Company, Tippecanoe City, Ohio, September 9<sup>th</sup> 1926. Georgia State Fair Association Collection, Box 11, Folder 78b.

The Klan's appearance at the 1925 state fair demonstrates the public recognition that the Invisible Empire had achieved within the community since 1915, yet was also indicative of its decline. By the mid-1920s the Klan had been hit by a series of nationwide and local scandals that had seriously diminished their power. Their appearance at the state fair represented an attempt to regain local power. Nationally, the worst of these scandals occurred in 1925 when David Curtiss Stephenson, the Klan's "American Grand Dragon" of Indiana (and various other northern states), was convicted of the second degree murder of state worker Madge Oberholtzer, an event which practically destroyed sections of the Indiana Klan.<sup>91</sup> Macon's previous loyalty to the Klan and its position as host of the Georgia State Fair made the fair a logical place in which to try to regain Klan public support. Locally, the Macon branch had been involved in a series of floggings carried out within the white community, as seen in the Yarbrough trial.<sup>92</sup> Nonetheless, the *New York Times* conceded that Macon was still a "Klan stronghold," unlike other areas of Georgia, such as Savannah, where Klan membership was in steep decline.<sup>93</sup>

Despite these setbacks, in 1926, the Klan was still interested in the state election held that year and were actively pushed for political power.<sup>94</sup> Klan Day, therefore, was used as an occasion to honour former Governor Clifford Walker, an open Klan supporter.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>M. William Lutholtz, *Grand Dragon: D.C. Stephenson and the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana* (Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1991), 178.

<sup>92</sup>*Palm Beach Post*, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1923.

<sup>93</sup>*New York Times*, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1923.

<sup>94</sup>Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 75.

<sup>95</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1926; State elections were held on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1926, so by the time of the State Fair, Walker had been replaced by Lamartine Griffin Harman. Harman had no known ties with the Klan and his election during a time when the Klan was grappling for political influence was

Walker was still associated with the Klan's influence and had apparently followed through on his promise, given during the Klan's national convention in 1922, that if Klan members got into trouble, instead of reporting them, he would just "come right here to your leaders and talk to you."<sup>96</sup> The white fair organisers emphasised the Klan's connection with Georgia by combining "Klan Day" with "Atlanta Day", as Atlanta was where the Klan had been 'reborn' and also where its headquarters were located. In creating a day devoted to Atlanta, Walker and the Klan, the organisers of the state fair had, in effect, drawn together defining characteristics associated with the Georgia chapter of the Klan during this period. The day was a declaration of what the Klan stood for and its relationship with Georgia.

The Klan's appearance at Georgia's white state fair, however, was not enough to counteract a decline in Klan power in the following years. The Klan continued to suffer serious set-backs on a local and national level. In 1926, Walker had been replaced by Harman as governor, a further indication of their diminishing political power. By 1927, the national body of the Klan suffered economic setbacks as, according to the *Miami News*, the group had become insolvent after spending funds to oppose the candidacy of Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York.<sup>97</sup> The diminishing political and economic power of the Klan was accompanied by physical images of its decline on a local level. In 1929, the Macon Klan's headquarters had been abandoned and was then destroyed by

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symptomatic of the group's diminishing power. Pamela Hackbart-Dean, "Georgia's Renaissance

Governor: Lamartine Hardman—Physician, Mill Owner, Agriculturalist", *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 79 (Summer 1995): 441-52.

<sup>96</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 72.

<sup>97</sup> *Miami News*, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1928.

an accidental blaze which caused \$11,000 worth of damage.<sup>98</sup> The burnt-out symbol of the Klan headquarters in 1929 stood in stark contrast to the force of the membership figures wielded by the Klan at the beginning of 1920.

The Klan's presence at the state fair during the period illustrates how the fairs were politicised sites which reflected wider social circumstances and changes. Consequently they served as sites of racial agitation. African American sources are singularly unrevealing about Macon's black community's reaction to the Klan's social dominance and appearance at the state fair in these years. A black response to the Klan can, however, be gleaned from their hesitance to attend the 1929 white state fair and also participate in a designated "Negro Department". Macon's African American citizens had to be actively encouraged to participate and were assured: "There is no sign of humiliation. The members of both races have a desire to make the fair a marked success. Therefore, no member of our group should fear any kind of humiliation. Come to the fair and get the instruction that the association is so anxious for all citizens to have."<sup>99</sup> With the appearance of the Klan at the fair three years earlier, it is not surprising that the black community was reluctant to enter into the white space of the fair. The black community's unwillingness to attend illustrates the depth of the humiliation and racism suffered by African Americans on a daily basis and was itself an expression of protest. Such silences therefore speak to us and demonstrate that the black community used their absence as a non-confrontational method to oppose white violence.

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<sup>98</sup>*Atlanta Constitution*, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1929.

<sup>99</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1929.



*The 1929 Negro Department*

From 1926, as the aggressive extremism of the Invisible Empire diminished, so too did the lynchings and reported violence in Macon. Brundage states that from 1926 to 1929 only two men were lynched in Georgia, one of whom was white.<sup>100</sup> This figure contrasts with the peak lynching year of 1919 which claimed 21 lives.<sup>101</sup> By 1929, the NAACP had also lost its position within southern towns and was concentrating on the North. On the surface, the threat of black activism and the corresponding threat of white reaction had diminished. This did not mean that racial control lessened since Jim Crow regulations were still firmly entrenched as were other tenets of racial control.

The inclusion of the African American community for the first time at the 1929 State Fair publicly demonstrated a more moderate racial climate. The “Negro Department” meant that African Americans were a visible presence for the whole ten days during which the fair was held.<sup>102</sup> The department displayed exhibits by Bibb County’s African American citizens and was described by the *Macon Telegraph* as an entire building which was set apart “for the display of agricultural and home products”. The exhibits comprised a variety of materials including everything from field crops to arts and crafts and baked goods.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, Appendix A, 22, Georgia, 280. Both of these lynchings took place in 1926.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 278-279.

<sup>102</sup> *Macon News*, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1929; *Macon News*, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1929.

<sup>103</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1929.

While this inclusion in the white event reflected wider racial changes in the Macon community, it also reflected the changing economic situation. Despite urban prosperity during the 1920s, rural southerners “usually marked the end of World War I as the beginning of the depression” because the “economic downtown hit southern farmers, especially tenants, hard.”<sup>104</sup> By the mid-1920s, the boll weevil had devastated the entire region’s cotton production, sending southern agriculture into a tailspin.<sup>105</sup> Post-1928, there was also a period of economic contraction and unemployment,<sup>106</sup> as Macon started to experience the ripple effect caused by erratic inflation throughout the 1920s which, in turn, had led to speculation and unsound lending.<sup>107</sup> As people became affected by the economic downturn, they would have been less able to afford recreational events such as the state fair. By introducing a “Negro Department,” the fair’s organisers increased access to more of the population which, in turn, created greater attendance figures and increased potential revenue. On a symbolic level, during this period of instability, the “Negro Department” also presented an image of agricultural plenitude and a multitude of black workers within Macon and Georgia, despite the economic downtown.

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<sup>104</sup> Melissa Walker, *Southern Farmers and their Stories: Memory and Meaning in Oral History* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2004), 24.

<sup>105</sup> Manis, *Macon: Black and White*, 108.

<sup>106</sup>“U.S. Census Reports: Unemployment Returns 1920” (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office 1921), 25, cited in Anderson, “*A City Comes of Age: An Urban Study of Macon, Georgia During the 1920s*”, 94.

<sup>107</sup> Richard M. Salsman, “Bankers as Scapegoats for Government-Created Crises in U.S. History” in Lawrence White (ed.), *The Crisis in American Banking* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 97-98.

It is hard to determine the extent of white influence and black agency within the “Negro Department”. The State Fair ledger, kept by the White Fair Association, notes only three names of people involved with the building.<sup>108</sup> This, paradoxically, could be indicative of a degree of apathy on the part of white organisers about who was in charge or, conversely, suggestive of a sense of autonomy granted to those in charge of the “Negro Building”. The *Macon News*, however, listed the names of the committee in charge of the “Negro Building”, many of whom were prominent African American citizens in Macon, including Charles Douglass, who had previously been involved with the state fair.<sup>109</sup> Other contributions were made by Reverend Gadson, Headmaster of Central City Baptist School, Professor Lee and Mme Wesley, Home Demonstration agents.<sup>110</sup> The lack of any records kept by the white organisers makes interpreting the extent of the African American influence and motivation problematic. Nevertheless, the “Negro Department,” even if allowed some degree of autonomy, had to make allowances for the desires of the White Fair Association. In short, the department was essentially a black space existing inside a designated white institution, thus making it hard to claim either a sense of independence or of belonging, despite it being a publicly visible black space.

Reverend J. T. Saxon’s column in the *Macon News*, which was “Devoted to the Interest of the Colored People,” provides an insight into how the “Negro Department” was presented and promoted amongst Macon’s African American community. Saxon organised Macon’s Memorial Baptist Church along with founding the Memorial Trade

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<sup>108</sup> Account Book, Ledger 1923-34, State Fair Association Collection, Box 1, Folder 2, Washington Memorial Library.

<sup>109</sup> *Macon Telegraph*, October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1929.

<sup>110</sup> *Macon News*, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1929.

School, which weathered the depression and trained unskilled people, getting them profitable employment.<sup>111</sup> Saxon's commentary was printed in a white-owned and operated newspaper. Any criticisms would have reflected on the African American community as a whole, given that various incidents, such as white retribution on the whole community for individual crimes had already shown that the black community was treated in a homogeneous manner. As a result, Saxon's discussion of the white fair and African American attendance and exhibits was poignantly tempered with praise for the white fair committee. Saxon pointedly commented that the committee "made a fine contribution to community progress when they extended the invitation and made provision for the colored people at the fair".<sup>112</sup> Saxon viewed the inclusion of African Americans in the fair as being advantageous to improving community relations and social progress.

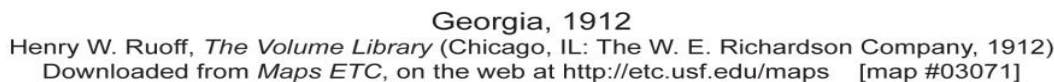
The multitude of people listed on the printed prize lists demonstrates that other members of the community shared Saxon's desire to attend. The black community equally wished to exhibit their achievements publicly and further themselves through the medium of the "Negro Department". Economic incentives helped encourage attendance as "[p]rizes for 174 different articles [were] being offered and most of these have a first and second prize."<sup>113</sup> The participation of leading members of Macon's black community would have also encouraged attendance; for instance, business entrepreneur Charles Douglass (treasurer for the Black State Fair, 1917-1919) won first prize in the agricultural exhibit for his bushels of corn. The prize lists published in the

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<sup>111</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1951.

<sup>112</sup>*Macon News*, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1929.

<sup>113</sup>*Macon Telegraph*, October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1929.



<sup>114</sup>*Savannah Tribune*, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1912.

As in the previous black fair, exhibits of farming and agriculture displayed the contribution and progress of the black community. Comparing and contrasting the black fair and the 1929 Negro Department reveals an interesting trend while also demonstrating increased black participation in Corn Clubs; associations which were designed to teach young farmers about new techniques and better corn varieties.<sup>115</sup> In 1912, Wright revealed that boys' and girls' Corn Clubs had developed as a direct result of the black fair and Map 3 demonstrates in yellow where these Corn Clubs originated. Corn Clubs started gaining momentum in 1912 and Georgia's yearly educational reports mention, with increasing frequency, the activities of Corn Clubs, Canning Clubs and Pig Clubs. Similarly that same year Georgia's agricultural state agent, Phil J. Campbell, reported that boys' Corn Clubs were organised in 139 counties with a total enrolment of nearly 10,000 members, and there were five district contests held as a result.<sup>116</sup> African American Corn Clubs were not mentioned in reports issued by Georgia's Department of Education but, in 1913, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) concluded that they should be designated as "Negro" in order to distinguish them from programmes for white youths.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Mary von der Heide, "Green and Growing: The History of Home Demonstration and 4-H Youth Demonstration in North Carolina", North Carolina State University Libraries, [http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/specialcollections/greenngrowing/essay\\_early\\_ag\\_clubs.html](http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/specialcollections/greenngrowing/essay_early_ag_clubs.html) (accessed 31.06.11).

<sup>116</sup> Phil J. Campbell, Extension Demonstration Department State College of Agriculture, *Forty First Annual Report of the Department of Education to the General Assembly of the State of Georgia for the school year ending December 31, 1912* (Atlanta: Chas P. Byrd, 1913), 197.

<sup>117</sup> Debra A. Reid, *Reaping a Greater Harvest: African Americans, The Extension Service, and Rural Reform in Jim Crow Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 18.



Maps 1 and 3 highlight how the regions where Corn Clubs developed were almost always surrounded by the counties where the UNIA developed. Early was the only one county where a Corn Club coincided with a later branch of the UNIA. The article mentions 25 Corn Clubs in 1912 and, considering the overlap with UNIA divisions and agricultural exhibits it appears unusual that Corn Clubs did not develop in the agricultural communities which later embraced Garveyite ideology. White influence within the Corn Club programmes could be responsible for this pattern between Corn Clubs and UNIA divisions. The UNIA stood for black self-sufficiency and independence, an ethos which was not compatible with white governmental interaction. The willingness of African American Corn Clubs to accept, and work in conjunction with, white authorities suggests that the racial separation later advocated by Garvey did not appeal to these agricultural communities or was not compatible with their lifestyle. Demonstrations by, and agents from, the agricultural authorities regularly appeared at the Corn Clubs and did, indeed, form part of their ethos of striving to teach young people lessons from school and adapt them to practical uses on the farm. References to Georgia's Corn Clubs in the education reports and the yearly statistics of club members demonstrate how pervasive white authority influence was within the clubs.

As seen in Map 3, the black fair had played an important role in establishing early black Corn Clubs. The 1929 "Negro Department" demonstrated the continuation of the Canning Clubs alongside other agricultural clubs which were designed to encourage young black farmers. The extension of these Canning Clubs was the "4-H club," which was organised by USDA in order to connect schooling to rural life, and was mentioned in a section on "Suggestions for Boys' and Girls' Exhibits at Local, County, and State

Fairs”.<sup>118</sup> The 4-H club at the Georgia State Fair, however, seemed mainly devoted to the white children as there are no prizes offered for any 4-H members in the “Colored Prize Praise”.<sup>119</sup> Despite not being recognised within the fair, black children were becoming increasingly associated with official and mainstream associations which helped encourage black agricultural involvement creating a sense of continuity with the original aim of the black fair organisers. By 1929 4-H Clubs in Georgia had enlisted more than 5,000 black girls in a “four-year course in cooking, canning, sewing, nursing and other home-making arts”, a pathway which encouraged black women towards domestic service and other gendered roles which were similar to those promoted within the black fair.<sup>120</sup> These recruitment numbers illustrate how a number of black children were involved in 4-H club ventures within the region, though as the state fair was considered to be a white event the black branch of the 4-H association was not invited. Despite this rise in black agricultural and home initiatives, the 1929 department did not therefore reflect the same intent and emphasis on youth training that the black fair had foregrounded ten years earlier.

Participation within such clubs resulted from contact with government agents who travelled around with agricultural exhibits and held talks with rural black communities. Such agents were also prominent within Georgia State Fair’s “Negro Department” and demonstrate the increased influence of government agents in Southern black communities from the period of the black fair. In 1929, there were 21 “negro home

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<sup>118</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, “Cooperative Extension Work in Agricultural And Home Economics” (U.S Department of Agriculture, 1916-1917), 3 in

[http://naldr.nal.usda.gov/NALWeb/Agricola\\_Link.asp?Accession=CAT30984128](http://naldr.nal.usda.gov/NALWeb/Agricola_Link.asp?Accession=CAT30984128) (accessed 03.06.2011).

<sup>119</sup> *Macon News*, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1929.

<sup>120</sup> *Macon News*, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1929.



demonstration agents” in the state of Georgia.<sup>121</sup> “Negro” farm demonstration agents were likewise employed in 19 counties, reaching no fewer than 7,638 persons directly. The agents were “employed jointly by the counties, the state, and the government” to teach “negro farmers to be more intelligent, efficient and prosperous.”<sup>122</sup> A newspaper commentator, P. H. Stone, declared that the “agricultural and home economic products displayed by boys and girls, men and women were varied and of a high quality, telling in unmistakable terms the objectives of the extension program in Bibb County.” Stone also praised “Prof. S. H. Lee farm, demonstration agent, and Mrs. M. L. Wesley, home demonstration agent, [who] are due much credit for the excellent work they are doing in this county”.<sup>123</sup> Reverend Saxon stressed that the “Negro Department” felt “much indebted to Prof. Lee, our farm demonstrator, for the interest which has been taken in this effort. We realize that we have not reached our goal but still Prof. Lee along with our home demonstrator and other promoters of the colored department should be greatly encouraged.”<sup>124</sup> To encourage black attendance in these fields, the Negro Department offered prizes for the “advancement in modern methods of farming and betterment of the conditions of the homes.”<sup>125</sup>

The “Negro Department” also evidenced other developments within Macon’s black education system as more black schools had been established within the community since the end of the black fair. Titus Brown argues that “[i]n Macon, as generally throughout the South, public support for black education was increasing in the post-war

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> *Macon News*, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1929.

<sup>123</sup> *Macon News*, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1929.

<sup>124</sup> *Macon News*, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1929.

<sup>125</sup> *Macon News*, October 20<sup>th</sup> 1929.

years, due in part to efforts to halt the great migration of black laborers to the North. State and County officials in Southern states increased education funding for black students and attempted to appease African American communities by providing better facilities and classes that extended beyond the sixth grade.”<sup>126</sup> School departmental displays at the “Negro Department” came from many new schools in Macon that had been established since the black fair ended and demonstrate this growth. These schools included Hudson High School which, founded in 1922, was Macon’s first public high school for black students.<sup>127</sup> Other new school exhibits included Beda Etta, which was set up between 1922 and 1923 by black Maconite Minnie L. Smith,<sup>128</sup> and Cressville which was established in 1923.<sup>129</sup> Exhibits similar to those at the black fair sought to teach “fine lessons about health, fire prevention, home making, handicraft and academic skill.”<sup>130</sup>

The rise of Black Nationalism earlier in the decade and increased desire for economic, educational and political independence juxtaposed with the continued use of Washington’s policy of accommodation within the “Negro Department” suggests a degree of stagnation within Macon’s black community. The accommodationist tone which Saxon utilised when describing the Negro Department was similar to that of the

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<sup>126</sup> Titus Brown, *Faithful, Firm and True: African American Education in the South* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2002), 106.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 106

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>130</sup> *Macon News*, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1929. Other schools included Walkers Business College, Fort Valley High and Industrial School, Hazel Street, Pleasant Hill, Green Street, East Macon Swift Creek, Bloomfield Elementary Schools.

black fair over twenty years previously. In fact, Saxon's commentary on the "Negro Department" shared significant features of Washington's speech at the World Fair "Negro Department" over thirty years earlier. Saxon stated that, through the department, "our people have an opportunity to show to the [sic] white friends that we are willing to do our best with what we have and the opportunity that is given to us."<sup>131</sup> Saxon presented a trajectory of uplift, albeit with moderation, an iteration of Washington's initial espousal of accommodationism in the Atlanta Compromise. Saxon, likewise, emphasised moral and personal piety, stressing that "people are beginning to learn that this world has no place for ignorant, indolent, and shiftless people. That is the object of the fair. If it fails to show a man his defects and fails to inspire and encourage the thrifty trained men and women, the fair will fall short of its objective. People who have kept their eyes open will know the world is moving forward and Georgia is included."<sup>132</sup> His rhetoric hedged the issue of either black or white responsibility yet, at the same time, advocated progress. Subsequently, Saxon couched the purpose of the fair in puritan terms, favouring virtues such as diligence, studiousness and godliness as aids to African American success and betterment.<sup>133</sup> When Saxon discussed the fair as an opportunity for people to "rise up like a man," these were the tools they would use.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> *Macon News*, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1929.

<sup>132</sup> *Macon News*, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1929.

<sup>133</sup> This emphasis on puritan values as a way of advancement is closely linked to Alexis de Tocqueville's ideas in *Democracy in America*. A century earlier, Tocqueville had concluded that the puritan ethos of America's founders provided a foundation for American democracy and individualism. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Colonial Press, 1899).

<sup>134</sup> *Macon News*, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1929.

Similar to Washington, Saxon advocated industrial trades as a pathway for racial uplift.<sup>135</sup> Saxon's involvement with a black Baptist trade school was reflected in his commentary on the "Negro Department" as his column intertwined messages of racial uplift with promotion of African American industrial education. Saxon connected uplift to exhibits by Macon's various industrial schools, noting how it "means so much in the way of inspiring our people to higher and nobler things".<sup>136</sup> The prize lists and the minutes of the organisation committee also imply a degree of African American productivity and achievement within the public arena. Separate "colored awards" were given out for a variety of achievements such as agricultural exhibits – ranging from bell peppers to pecans – cakes, embroidery and the best displays for exhibits from elementary and secondary schools.<sup>137</sup> Saxon similarly linked the progress made through education with the improvement of the African American homestead, mentioning "beautiful homes, owned and controlled by our group, having beautiful streets and large yards".<sup>138</sup> This emphasis on black homes corresponds with historian Michele Mitchell's assertion that "during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, then reform-minded women and men equated cramped living quarters with filth, high morbidity levels, and immorality."<sup>139</sup> The homestead, therefore, became important on numerous

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<sup>135</sup> Rev. Saxon organised Macon's Memorial Baptist Church along with founding the Memorial Trade School, which weathered the depression and trained unskilled people, getting them profitable employment. *Macon Telegraph*, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1951.

<sup>136</sup> *Macon News*, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1929.

<sup>137</sup> *Macon News*, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1929.

<sup>138</sup> Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*, 388.

levels, since treasuring home ownership was a sign of race advancement and visions of the home environment became signifiers of the black race's future.<sup>140</sup>

Although pragmatic, accommodationism was dependent on the white community to recognise and grant privileges and it was because the "Negro Department" existed within a white space that the strategy of accommodationism was once again used to establish a dialogue between white organisers and black participants. Saxon's interpretation of black progress demonstrates that Washingtonian policy was still an effective way of advancing an African American agenda but also reveals its limitations. Saxon's use of the dialogues suggests that he was aware of the pressure imposed by white authority and its restrictions upon public displays of black progress.

Contrasting the use of accommodationist dialogues at the 1929 "Negro Department" and its previous use at Macon's black state fair emphasises that there had been wider changes in the political and social climate. The rise of the NAACP, the death of Washington and the influence of Marcus Garvey had changed the tenor of black activism and political ideology within the South since the beginning of the twentieth century. Both Garvey and the NAACP had developed the more radical aspects contained within Washington's strategy, pushing the tenets of economic self-sufficiency and black education espoused in accommodationist uplift ideology further into radical black political thought.<sup>141</sup> Although ten years had elapsed, these changes in black political ideology were not reflected within the "Negro Department" at the 1929 white

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 148-151.

<sup>141</sup> Claudrena N. Harold, *The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South* (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 16.

State Fair – in fact, quite the opposite. The department lacked many of the elements which had made the black state fair radical or politicised. It did not host Business Days, did not participate in the parades nor, indeed, promote the work of black professionals such as doctors. Newspaper reports, instead, stressed black agricultural roles and the products of black farmers. At the earlier black fair African American agriculturalists had been treated as a valuable and significant part of the black economic community and despite a similar emphasis on black agriculture, the newspaper did not use similar terminology, making the importance of such occupations benign within the context of the “Negro Department”.

Sectors of the southern black community were becoming increasingly radical and accommodationism was thus considered to be an out-dated method by members of the black political community.<sup>142</sup> Indeed, by 1931, the *Negro Year Book* (edited by Tuskegee educator, Monroe Work) directly challenged the concept of racial uplift in a section entitled “Suggestions to White Speakers Addressing Audiences of Colored People” written by Fritz Cansler, who advised that the use of “stereotyped, archaic and time-worn theories of ‘racial uplift’ will doubtless leave your audience cold and unresponsive”<sup>143</sup> The inclusion of Cansler’s advice within the *Negro Year Book* illustrates that within national black social dialogues members of the African American community were rejecting Washingtonian notions of racial uplift as a device through which to engage with black audiences.

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>143</sup> Monroe Work (ed.), *The Negro Year Book: An Annual Encyclopaedia of the Negro 1931-1932* (Tuskegee, Alabama: Negro Year Book Publishing Company, 1931), 18-19.

Despite evidence of a national move away from accommodation, the strategy's continued use suggests that it was one of the few moderate forms of recourse available to the black community. Accommodationism allowed black and white moderates to interact in a way deemed socially acceptable by the white community. Historian Louis Harlan has stressed that Washington's strategy of accommodation had shown him to be a "political realist".<sup>144</sup> In fact, the strategy had allowed Washington to build workable coalitions between black and white elites and its continuation past his death testifies to the durability of the strategy within the local environment. Even after his death, Washington's name was still used as a symbol of "public institutions across the United States [which] used the name extensively to memorialize black achievement."<sup>145</sup> Washington's strategy of racial uplift was therefore more widely utilised within the South as opposed to more radical concepts espoused by the NAACP.

Continued white dominance still necessitated the use of accommodationist dialogues between the white and black community. Within Macon's local arena, the failure of the NAACP and the rise of the Klan showed how extreme and controlling white responses could be and how African Americans were unwilling to affiliate themselves with more politicised associations. Despite being the antithesis of one another, neither the NAACP nor the Ku Klux Klan offered a middle ground for white moderates. The ideology of accommodationism, therefore, translated into a workable strategy which helped African Americans and whites maintain "amicable" race relations within the tight fabric of Macon's local community. As my thesis shows, by this point, it was also a common and

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<sup>144</sup> Raymond Smock, *Booker T. Washington in Perspective: Essays of Louis R. Harlan* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006), 179.

<sup>145</sup> Robert J. Norrell, *Up from History: The Life of Booker T Washington* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), 423.

fairly successful historical strategy which may have been why it was reverted to in times of trouble or social stress. Needless to say, however, it did not necessarily translate into an easy relationship as African American accommodationism was still dependent on white benevolence. Despite Reverend Saxon's belief that "our work will make much better showing" next year, the Negro Department did not appear at the 1930 fair.<sup>146</sup> The debut of the "Negro Department" was, therefore, destined to be its last appearance at the Georgia State Fair, again demonstrating the extent to which white control and black exclusion was enforced within recreational events and Southern society at large during this period.

### *Conclusion*

When the black fair finished in 1919, so ended a unique event in Georgia's African American history. The fair had helped to pull together different strands of Georgia's black middle-class community, uniting them through the common cause of uplift. The interests which had previously merged in the fair in 1906 diverged in later years. As the ideology of that uplift movement failed to yield any tangible results, so the different urban and rural communities and strata of black middle classes started to look towards more politicised figures, ideologies and associations. As a result the fair was no longer the most viable option to further African political, social and educational aspirations and concerns, and it became obsolete. However, the mushrooming of the NAACP and UNIA associations helped demonstrate how many of its more radical aspects had been channelled into popular black ideologies. The rural communities who contributed agricultural exhibits to the fair later hosted branches of the UNIA. Likewise, urban

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<sup>146</sup>*Macon News*, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1929.



black networks involved with the organization of the black fair later became hosts for the first southern bases of the NAACP. The rise of these two different political associations within black communities demonstrates a politicised response to their personal surroundings, a response which was met with increased white violence and reactionary groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. The use of recreational space at the Georgia fairs demonstrates the prevalence of the Hooded Empire within Macon's local community. Georgia's state fair, likewise, illustrates how the decline of the Klan, combined with economic necessities, led to the inclusion of the black community at the white fair in 1929. The appearance of the "Negro Department" shows the continuation of the policies of the black fair. It also demonstrated where segregated events had led to and indicated less autonomy for the black community. The radical and political elements realised within Macon's black fair were made more significant in comparison to this later recreational space. 1919 onwards was thus marked the absence of the black fair. Conversely, it also, demonstrated how the economic, social and political directives of the early African- American fairs had been realised in later years, within established ideologies. The absence of such exhibits in the 1929 Negro Department ultimately attested to the threat such messages posed to the founding pillars of white supremacy

## Epilogue

When African Americans in Macon first established the black fair in 1906, the event was imbued with added significance due to the violent context of the Atlanta race riot. The riot had illustrated just how precarious black existence was, as black citizens were subject to vicious attacks by whites. White resentment of black citizenship made the black fair especially significant as it offered an opportunity for African Americans to express a more positive image of black community without fear of retribution. On a basic level, the fair was a brief interlude of fun for many blacks whose daily employment was often tedious, degrading and underpaid. As a public event, however, the fair also provided a point of negotiation where Macon's black and white communities could interact and develop a relationship. This relationship was largely based on accommodationism, a strategy which allowed a small degree of black authority, though white involvement sought to ensure that southern racial hierarchy as a whole was not threatened. Ironically, this white presence helped deflect attention away from more politicised and radical elements contained within the fair.

The fair perpetuated a sense of black community and networks, thus creating a sense of dignity in the face of repression. The fair elevated the work of the black middle class, providing evidence of social, political and economic progress since emancipation. The fair also helped connect fairgoers with political figures and speeches which urged them to consider the vital role they played in the economic structure of the South. Other speeches condemned lynching and chastised whites for the part they played in the barbaric practice. Exhibits and speakers likewise stressed the importance of economic power, education, black businesses and the independence granted through agriculture,

thus demonstrating the role of institutions, such as the fair, in fostering a more radical and political mind-set within black communities. These messages related to the founding tenets of several black political ideologies that emerged during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. After the black fair discontinued in 1919, the political implications of such ideas were realised in groups such as the UNIA and the NAACP.

This thesis reveals how the study of the fair contributes to our understanding of numerous aspects of the black experience during Jim Crow, especially the complicated negotiation of the colour line. It furthers our understanding of accommodationism and how that theory was utilised practically within community events. It similarly proffers arguments about, and strengthens evidence of, class splits within the black community; splits which deny a reading of African Americans as one homogeneous group with similar aspirations and goals. Accommodationism and class issues were often interlinked and speeches at the fair demonstrated how several black leaders sought to deter black Americans from emigrating North, illustrating that on occasion accommodationist dialogues were used to further the interests of the black middle class over those of the lower classes. Conversely, while showing divisions within the black community, the fair was important as an event which drew together many different black groups, institutions and establishments. The fair is an example of the community building activities of the black middle class and how they used their social status to differentiate themselves from the lower classes in order to draw attention to such events. The middle class formed a communal network of churches, fraternal associations and businesses and their unity at the fair demonstrates how such parallel institutions collectively helped break through the isolating effects of racism. Consequently, they formed a grassroots base which helped develop black politicised thoughts and actions.

Additionally, the black fair is an important example of how African Americans used recreation in order to address imbalances within southern society. Overall, this thesis helps reposition one recreational institution as representative of others and stresses their importance within the wider context of black civic struggles. The promulgation of a strong black community, combined with exhibitions of economic and business success, meant that ideas presented by associations such as the UNIA and the NAACP in the 1910s and 1920s were already familiar to the black community, long before they were formalised within political ideology. The stress on self-sufficiency and agriculture suggests a reason why the UNIA achieved such rapid success and popularity within southern black communities. Such recreational events are significant as they show how the Civil Rights Movement developed from indirect avenues. Events like the fair were often a product of their immediate context and were therefore only considered a temporary solution rather than a long-term strategy. Nonetheless, such events can show us exactly which issues were affecting the black community in that specific time and locale.

Since slavery, black institutions had flourished as a way to escape the white gaze. Ranging from a multitude of religious churches and fraternal associations, they even extended to separate historic memories and celebrations. Historical focus has often been centred on formal institutions such as churches and fraternities, as places which helped create a refuge from white eyes and formed a vital base for black activism. Public and recreational spaces have not been similarly explored for the role which they played in creating politicised sentiment. While warranted by necessity, separate black institutions also provided a focal point for present struggles; as Webb and Brown note, celebrations

of black history were not only a source of “psychological empowerment” but they also “provided southern blacks with a renewed focus on the future.”<sup>1</sup> The black fair likewise served as a parallel institution to the white-controlled state fair but additionally created a site in which to celebrate ongoing black progress and achievement.

Historians have pointed out the paradox that Jim Crow led to the creation of separate black institutions that served as the means of African Americans’ later overthrow of white supremacy. William Chafe in particular uses this point to stress historical continuity, showing how the civil rights movement grew out of the institutions founded by earlier generations of African Americans. Chafe states: “It is easy to define one period as a time of accommodation and another as an era of protest. But using such labels can obscure the most important truth that the black experience in American has been one of constant struggle.”<sup>2</sup> The fair is evidence of a black tradition of activism and resistance and it was a precursor of the later Civil Rights movement. While the fair was in itself a strategy of resistance, it was not, however, the same strategy, of non-violent protest and civil unrest as later employed by civil rights activists of the 1950s. The activism of the fair does not therefore correspond with the concept of a Long Civil Rights Movement, as defined by Jacqueline Dowd Hall who argues that black civil activism was born from the “liberal and radical milieu of the late 1930s.”<sup>3</sup> This extended timeframe contrasts with the period from 1954 to 1968, which has

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<sup>1</sup> Clive Webb and David Brown, *Race in the American South From Slavery to Civil Rights* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 226-227.

<sup>2</sup> William H. Chafe, “The Gods bring Threads to the Webs Begun”, *Journal of American History*, 86 (2000), 1531-2.

<sup>3</sup> Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past”, *Journal of American History*, 91, 4 (March 2005), 1235.

traditionally been defined as the civil rights movement, as it resulted in significant legal victories which helped to dismantle the Jim Crow regime. The fair instead operated in the confines of Jim Crow as opposed to deliberately attacking the system. The fair was, however, evidence of the constant struggle and striving of African Americans, ambitions which pervaded every aspect of their lives, even spaces which were devoted to recreation.

The connection between recreational and political space can be seen by the re-emergence of the Middle Georgia Colored Fair in Macon during the 1940s and 1950s, which coincided with black attempts to reinstate a local chapter of the NAACP. Both were evidence of a strong black community sentiment and activism and their coincidence supports the assertion in this thesis that black fairs helped create alternative political spaces during a period when black power was severely repressed. Additionally, the appearance of black fairs in later years demonstrates that the 1906-1919 fair is indicative of a much wider topic which has a greater significance within America's social, political and cultural studies.

The 1941 Middle Georgia Colored Fair shared many features with the previous black fairs and also with the 1929 "Negro Department". The 1941 fair was cheaper than its earlier counterpart, costing 5 cents for children and 10 cents for adults, presumably because it had a more local focus and was smaller.<sup>4</sup> Details of the event show that prizes were also offered for various exhibits and there were also entertainment features and

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<sup>4</sup>*Macon News*, October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1941. In 1914, William T. and Peyton T. Anderson purchased the *Telegraph*. Under their leadership, the paper inaugurated a special page focusing on the black community. They also purchased the *Macon News* and combined some staff positions between the two papers. The *News* continued to publish in the afternoon, while the *Telegraph* remained the morning paper.

performers, such as escape artist Zadock the Great.<sup>5</sup> Figures that had appeared at the 1929 Negro Department were also present at the 1941 fair, as, for example, Mrs Mayme Wesley, an African American home demonstration agent. Black agricultural clubs, such as the black 4-H club, additionally appeared, showing how such institutions had continued to flourish since their appearance at the black state fair twenty years previously.

The 1941 fair proved to be popular as it attracted thousands of blacks and a “representative group of whites” was also invited to attend.<sup>6</sup> Despite a minor degree of white participation, the 1941 fair was more focused on the black community. The fair was organised by The Homosophian Club, a black, fraternal, charity and welfare organisation composed of “leading Macon Negroes” which was led by President Cassander Woodliff Sellars.<sup>7</sup> Under the auspices of Sellars and the Homosophian Club, the fair similarly became an event which sought to further the needs of the black community, as opposed to furthering the relationship with the black and white community as had been the case with the 1906 fair. The 1941 fair was accompanied by a greater sense of ownership than the earlier fairs, as demonstrated by an advert for the event which proclaimed “It’s your Fair, let’s all go!”<sup>8</sup> Likewise, instead of being

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<sup>5</sup>*Macon News*, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1941; October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1941.

<sup>6</sup>*Macon News*, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1941.

<sup>7</sup>*The Homosophian Magazine*, August 1927, Volume 2, No. 1, Homosophian Club Collection. Little information survives on the civic association bar a few newspaper reports coupled with a single newsletter from 1927, which professed its commitment towards being a “race publication that would be wholly democratic in its views”. Washington Memorial Library, Macon, Georgia; *Macon News*, October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1941.

<sup>8</sup>*Macon News*, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1941.

reported on in white editorials the fair was covered in the ‘Personal and Social News for Colored People’, in the *Macon News*, which was edited by Minnie Singleton, a prominent member of the African American community. Despite the earlier invitation to whites, the events, inclusion in the “News for Colored People”, demonstrated how the event was intended to be for African Americans.

Unlike the black fair in previous years which had been held in the white-dominated Central City Park, the fair was held in and around First and Amos Streets which were located in Pleasant Hill.<sup>9</sup> This area contained a thriving black community which, by the mid-twentieth century, housed many black professionals; businesses and occupations within the community ranged from carpenters to bankers.<sup>10</sup> With a lot of black families owning land, which enabled them to maintain vegetable gardens and keep livestock, Pleasant Hill was testimony to black self-sufficiency and autonomy.<sup>11</sup> The location of the fair was, therefore, a celebration of black figures and institutions prominent in Macon’s African American community. For example, the fair also spread out over the playground named after Mattie Hubbard Jones, an African American woman who was the playground Director of Pleasant Hill for a number of years.<sup>12</sup> Additionally the Mattie Hubbard Jones playground was under the auspices of the Peter Cleaver Catholic church,<sup>13</sup> which was established in Macon by Friar Lissner and the church was designed

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<sup>9</sup>*Macon News*, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1941.

<sup>10</sup> Jeanette Herring, *Black American Series: Macon, Georgia* (Macon, Georgia: Arcadia Publishing, 2000), 19.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Herring, *Macon, Georgia*, 23.

<sup>13</sup> As the fair was located in a playground it meant that organisers had to get permission from the City Playground Department as opposed to the City Park Department. *Macon News*, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1941.



to help care “for the spiritual and temporal needs of black people.”<sup>14</sup> It again was symbolic of efforts to develop public and communal spaces in spite of white repression.

The 1942 fair illustrated that there was increased self-regulation on part of the black community as there was an additional emphasis on black policing at the event. In 1942, the *News* referred to, by name, twenty prominent black men who had police authority and were “responsible for the maintenance of order at the fair.”<sup>15</sup> This increased black vigilance was a result of national events which had further inflamed local race relations. Macon was reeling from America’s entry into World War II and (similar to the circumstances following World War I) during the summer of 1942, “black military personnel stationed near Macon, along with those affiliated with other auxiliary organizations, began to complain of discrimination.”<sup>16</sup> In addition, there were state-wide reports of increased black employment, which the *Telegraph* blamed for the upsurge in racial attacks during this period.<sup>17</sup>

In response to the increased tension and violence, Macon’s African Americans took action and applied to the NAACP board of directors for a charter. In 1942, two black men, John Jenkins and Dr E. M. Calhoun, ran an advertisement in the *Telegraph* urging blacks to join the organisation and “fight for their rights”.<sup>18</sup> Predictably, whites reacted

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<sup>14</sup> Tubman African American Museum, *Macon’s Black Heritage: The Untold Story* (Macon: Georgia: Tubman African American Museum, 1997), 115.

<sup>15</sup> *Macon News*, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1942.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew M. Manis, *Macon: Black and White: An Unutterable Separation in the American Century* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press and Tubman African American Museum), 141.

<sup>17</sup> Manis, *Macon: Black and White*, 142.

<sup>18</sup> Tubman African American Museum, *Macon’s Black Heritage*, 5.

with fear and the men involved were summoned before the grand jury and questioned about any outside influences which had encouraged the men. Because African Americans were still fearful of joining due to white reprisal, the chapter faded despite some initial success.<sup>19</sup> This renewed effort for black political representation and overt black activism explains why there was such an increased emphasis on policing at the fair in 1942.

The 1942 black fair iterates and furthers the argument that Macon's black fairs and organisers were connected with political impulses and associations. Many black figures involved with Macon's politics were also involved with the fair. At the 1942 Middle Georgia Colored Fair, these included William Randall<sup>20</sup> who for years was "considered to be the one person who held the reins of power in the black community."<sup>21</sup> During the period of the fair Randall, along with Frank Hutchings, was arrested for printing sample ballots which, according to Randall, were meant to aid blacks who had never been exposed to them. Randall was also a member of the Democratic Club which, during this period, was highly influential in deciding which white candidate to endorse and subsequently receive the bloc vote.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, Frank Hutchings, who was involved with the 1942 black fair<sup>23</sup> was known for his early management of Macon's NAACP in the 1920s and that, along with other deeds, earned him the accolade: "Mr Civil Rights

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> *Macon News*, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1942.

<sup>21</sup> Tubman African American Museum, *Macon's Black Heritage*, 9.

<sup>22</sup> Tubman African American Museum, *Macon's Black Heritage*, 10. In 1962, Randall led a bus boycott and, in 1966, he became president of Macon's NAACP.

<sup>23</sup> *Macon News*, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1942.

of Macon, Georgia”.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, in 1942, both Hutchings and Minnie Singleton, who reported on the fair, were both listed in the NAACP charter application for Macon during its re-emergence in 1942.<sup>25</sup>

Corresponding with its earlier counterpart the 1942 fair helps illustrate wider splits within the black community though, unlike in 1906, these splits were along ideological as opposed to class lines. There is evidence of developing factionalism among Macon’s prominent black activist groups and figures, which intensified later in the century. The *Telegraph* stressed that Macon’s “blacks point to political factions in the community which align with and oppose each other on various issues.”<sup>26</sup> Out of the three named cliques, one faction was headed by Randall. So whereas splits evidenced in the early fair were between the lower and upper classes, these later splits were more apparent within the middle classes in regard to their views about black civil rights.

It is uncertain when the second venture of the Middle Georgia Colored Fair ended, although, in 1944, the event was reported on in the national entertainment publication entitled the *Billboard*.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, the fair was reported in Moses Lightfoot’s column for the black community in the *News* in 1950, which stated that the fair was celebrating its eighth year and that 5,000 people visited.<sup>28</sup> In 1950, a separate Georgia State Colored

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<sup>24</sup> Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Epsilon Beta Lambda Chapter,  
[http://aphiaepsilonbetalambda.com/during\\_the\\_fall\\_of\\_1947.htm](http://aphiaepsilonbetalambda.com/during_the_fall_of_1947.htm) (accessed 02.07.11).

<sup>25</sup> Manis, *Macon: Black and White*, 378.

<sup>26</sup> Tubman African American Museum, *Macon’s Black Heritage*, 9.

<sup>27</sup> *Billboard*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1944, 42.

<sup>28</sup> *Macon News*, November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1950. This is erroneous if the fair had been in existence since 1941; *Macon News*, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1950.

Fair was also held, with more than 4,000 persons attending.<sup>29</sup> The event was considered to be the black alternative to the white state fair, and had been moved from the African American area of Pleasant Hill back to Central City Park. According to the paper, the events and attractions promised to make it the “greatest fair since the days of Major Wright.”<sup>30</sup>

The reinstatement of an official black state fair demonstrated how the event was again accepted into Macon’s public mainstream, possibly due to the fact that the self-contained Middle Georgia Colored Fair had proven to be such a commercial success. Again, this corresponds with and develops themes brought to the forefront in this thesis regarding white support of black ventures when they furthered white economic needs. As asserted in Chapter One, the 1906 fair was supported by white business elites as a method with which to reduce racial tensions after Atlanta’s riot, in the hope it would help restore a peaceful environment in which white businesses could prosper. Their actions shared similarities with the response of white civic and business leaders in the 1950s, who helped broker compromises with civil rights activists and accept changes to Jim Crow regulations, as it would help minimise disruption to their businesses. White pragmatism at the early and late fairs thus creates a sense of historical continuity and reveals the economic motivation behind white support of black recreational ventures and the political impulses contained within them.

In Georgia, and across the South, fairs continued to be segregated, demonstrating that separate black fairs were still warranted by necessity. Derek Nelson states that “fairs

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<sup>29</sup>*Macon News*, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1950.

<sup>30</sup>*Macon News*, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1950.

were often segregated – particularly in the south prior to the civil rights movement”.<sup>31</sup> As with Georgia in the early twentieth century, there is also evidence of both the State and County fairs continuing to have separate days for African Americans and for white fairgoers. Mark Schulz notes in his study of rural Georgia that the county of “Sparta also hosted the annual white county fair, with a day set aside for black patrons and the colored county fair, with a day set aside for whites.”<sup>32</sup>

In the mid-twentieth century these segregated spaces produced a black reaction and on occasion during the 1950s white state fairs were picketed by black protesters who sought to highlight discrimination within the events. While outside of the remit of this thesis the subsequent black activism at white state fairs provide further fruitful areas for future research.

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<sup>31</sup> Derek Nelson, *The American State Fair* (St Paul: Minnesota: MBI publishing, 1999), 112.

<sup>32</sup> Mark Schulz, *The Rural Face of White Supremacy: Beyond Jim Crow* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2005), 80.



10. Protest at the 1955 Dallas State Fair<sup>33</sup>

In 1955 a boycott of the white Texas State Fair was organised by the NAACP's youth council.<sup>34</sup> The protest also evidenced wider splits in the black community as the Negro Chamber of Commerce objected to the protests being held during "Negro Achievement Day" at the fair.<sup>35</sup> Outside the fair gates, members of the NAACP marched with placards which stated that: "It is no achievement to be segregated at the fair: STAY OUT!", a protest which was photographed by R. C. Hickman and covered by newspapers such as the *Dallas Express* and the *Star-Post*. Hickman stressed that the "*Star-Post* knew the white press wasn't going to publish our demonstrations and

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Marion Butts Collection and the Juanita Craft collection, Dallas Library, [www.dallaslibrary2.org/.../Marion%20Butts%20-%20State%20Fair.ppt](http://www.dallaslibrary2.org/.../Marion%20Butts%20-%20State%20Fair.ppt), p. 8 (accessed 03.07.11).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 11.

picketing for equal rights. We wanted to be sure that blacks knew what was going on and the only way they were going to know it was to put it in the newspaper.”<sup>36</sup>

The NAACP similarly held demonstrations at the Mississippi state fair as Anne Moody, an active member of the Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 1960s, recalls: “a few weeks after I got involved with the Tugaloo chapter of the NAACCP, they organized a demonstration at the state fair in Jackson”, sending four picketers to the fair.<sup>37</sup> Moody’s autobiography also highlights a more sinister use for the fairgrounds which were used to hold civil rights protestors after they were arrested: “The compounds they put us in were two large buildings used to auction off cattle during the annual State fair.”<sup>38</sup> Moody states that she, along with five hundred other high school girls, was held at the “fairgrounds concentration camp”<sup>39</sup> Such demonstrations show how state fairs continued to be seen as expressions and spaces of black progress or oppression.

The state fairs in the South continue to be a flashpoint for racial tensions in the twentieth-first century. In 2004, working on behalf of the Nationalist Movement, Richard Barrett set up a booth at the Mississippi State Fair in support for Edgar Ray Killen. Killen, a former Ku Klux Klan organiser, had been involved in the deaths of three civil rights activists in Philadelphia, Mississippi, in 1964. In 2004, due to new

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<sup>36</sup>“R. C. Hickman Photographic Archive, 1945-1970”, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, [http://www.cah.utexas.edu/exhibits/hickman/home/hickman\\_home.htm](http://www.cah.utexas.edu/exhibits/hickman/home/hickman_home.htm) (accessed 07.07.2008).

<sup>37</sup> Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (New York: Random House Inc, 1968), 272.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 305.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 362.

evidence, Killen was finally facing criminal charges.<sup>40</sup> Barrett stated that he intended to use the booth at the State Fair as a way to protest Killen's innocence by "asking folks to come for his autograph" which Killen signed on a "card featuring the three murdered men"<sup>41</sup>. Barrett argued that the state fair was a way to get in touch with ordinary people stressing that "we're going to listen to people that are milking cows, planting cotton, riding horses, who are going to come down at the grass roots level, sign this petition supporting Edgar Ray Killen."<sup>42</sup>

The state fair was, and still is, an event which various groups have utilised in order to further their own agenda within the public eye. It is an event which extends beyond a recreational endeavour, becoming instead a reflection of the community's social and political concerns. In the South, many of these concerns were shaped by its racial context. Both the early and later black fairs were inevitably influenced by Jim Crow and segregation and local community relationships. These fairs offered the opportunity for public recognition within southern society. The re-emergence of Georgia's black fair during the early 1940s, coupled with black protests at segregated state fairs in other southern communities in the 1950s, demonstrates that fairs offer a new lens through which to examine African American efforts for civic, social and political advancement in the repressive and violent atmosphere of the South. This exploration of Georgia's black fair in 1906-1919 is, therefore, only a starting point of what promises to be a rich

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<sup>40</sup> Killen was later convicted on three counts of manslaughter on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2005, and sentenced to 60 years in prison.

<sup>41</sup> Transcript from the interview between Travis Smiley and Richard Barrett on National Public Radio, September 22, 2004, [www.nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives](http://www.nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives) (accessed 06.07.08).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



and varied subject, one which will contribute to and enhance our understanding of Southern race relations throughout the last century.

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